



BWW Review: The New Musical SMALL TOWN STORY by American Theater Group is Onstage at SOPAC through 6/10

by Marina Kennedy Jun. 6, 2018

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American Theater Group (ATG) is now presenting a world premiere musical, *Small Town Story*, at South Orange Performing Arts Center (SOPAC) through Sunday, June 10. Directed by Eddie Prunoske, with musical direction by Jason Wetzel, and choreography by Jonothan Royse Windam, the show features a book and lyrics by Sammy Buck with music and lyrics by Brandon James Gwinn. It was conceived by Joe Barros, Laura Brandel, Sammy Buck, Karen Marshall, Reed

Prescott, and Sam Wilmott. Inspired by real-life events, *Small Town Story* was originally commissioned and developed by the New York Theater Barn. The production tops off ATG's first full season at SOPAC.



Set in the small North Texas town of Speargrove, the local high school is set to present "Rent" as their annual musical production. But the show's themes that deal with drug use and homosexuality create controversy in the relatively conservative community. Tensions rise, as some people believe that the show should be cancelled while the cast members and others want it to be produced. As the plot unfolds and friendships are formed, much is revealed about the individual character's personal lives and their struggles. *Small Town Story* is a very timely show that portrays the divisions in our country and thoughtfully addresses them.

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ATG has assembled a troupe led by a group of professional actors that includes [Joanna Young](#) as Inez Herrold; [Thursday Farrar](#) as Mrs. Nelson; [Stacey Todd Holt](#) as Larry Ames; and [Claire McClanahan](#) as Lois Patterson. The cast also showcases the talents of community players including [Nick Siccone](#) as Scott Ames; Jessi Clayton as Margie; AJ Foggiano as Timothy; [Lionel Ruland](#) as Dave; Frank Paiva as Mr. Ford; Zach Blanchette as Ricky Hunter; Nia Marche as Gwen; Sunnie Eraso as Kristen; Ilana Gabrielle as Alex Patterson; and Jacqueline Neeley as Carolyn Barnes. The live band onstage is a terrific touch that adds to the show's vibrant setting and complements the fine score.



The Design Team has brought Small Town Story to life on the South Orange stage with sound design by Laurie Pavero; costume design by [Summer Lee Jack](#); set design by [Bryce Cutler](#); props design by Jenna Leski. The Production Stage Manager is Rose Ricardi and the Casting Director is [Michael Cassara](#).

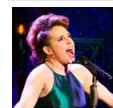
The American Theater Group led by Producing Artistic Director, James Vagias along with Co-founders and Artistic Advisors, [Rick Sordelet](#) and Joseph Mancuso is making its mark on the New Jersey theater scene by presenting engaging works and their arts-in-education programming. Visit the Group's web site at <http://www.americatheatergroup.org/>.

Small Town Story runs for 2 1/2 hours with one 15 minute intermission. For tickets, visit <https://www.sopacnow.org/small-town-story/> or call the Box Office at Box Office: (973) 313-2787. The theater is located at One SOPAC Way, South Orange, NJ 07079.

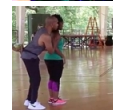
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Marina Kennedy

Marina P. Kennedy writes articles and reviews for Broadwayworld.com on performances and performers in New York and New Jersey. She is the Editor in Chief (read more...)

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