

People & Places



This image released by Disney Plus shows Bryan Cranston (right), with a gorilla named Ivan, voiced by Sam Rockwell, in a scene from 'The One and Only Ivan', which will stream exclusively Aug 21 on Disney Plus. (AP)

Media

'MacGruber' back

Bareilles to star in Peacock 'comedy'

NEW YORK, Aug 11, (Agencies): Sara Bareilles will be acting against type in her next role: She'll be playing a washed-up musician.

The NBCUniversal streaming platform Peacock said Monday the Grammy-winning artist and Broadway songwriter Bareilles will star in "Girls5eva," co-produced by Tina Fey.

The comedy is about a one-hit-wonder girl group called "Girls5eva" from the 1990s whose members reunite to give their pop star dreams one more shot.

Bareilles will play Dawn, a former member of Girls5eva who is now managing her family's small Italian restaurant in New York City.

Bareilles' hits include "Love Song" and "Brave." She composed the music and lyrics for the Broadway musical "Waitress" and made her Broadway acting debut in 2017 by stepping into the show's lead role.



Bareilles

Meredith Scardino will be writer and executive producer for the series. Fey will be an executive producer. No other casting was revealed, nor the date of its premiere.

Acclaim

Bareilles is an American singer-songwriter and actress. Her 2007 hit single "Love Song" reached no. 4 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. In the third season of NBC's The Sing-Off, Bareilles served as a celebrity judge alongside Ben Folds and Shawn Stockman. She composed music and wrote lyrics for the Broadway musical Waitress, for which she earned a Tony Award nomination for Best Original Score in 2016, and a Grammy nomination for Best Musical Theatre Album. In April 2018, Bareilles received acclaim for her portrayal of Mary Magdalene in NBC's live television concert adaptation of Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's rock opera Superstar, for which she was nominated for the 2018 Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Limited Series or Movie.

Bareilles has sold over one million albums and over nine million singles and downloads in the United States and has earned eight Grammy Award nominations, including one Album of the Year nomination for The Blessed Unrest (2013), and a win for the song "Saint Honesty" from the album Amidst the Chaos (2019), in the Best American Roots Performance category. In February 2012, VH1 placed Bareilles in the 80th spot of the Top 100 Greatest Women in Music. Her memoir, Sounds Like Me: My Life (So Far) in Song, was published in 2015; The New York Times listed it as a bestseller.

Peacock is launching a pair of weekly late-night comedy series with Larry Wilmore and Amber Ruffin to focus on current events. "We can't wait to write sketches, songs and jokes about this terrible time we call now!" Ruffin said in a statement Monday announcing the "The Amber Ruffin Show."

A writer and performer on NBC's "Late Night with Seth Meyers," Ruffin was among the first African American women to write for a late-night show.

Wilmore is a sitcom creator ("The Bernie Mac Show," "grown-ish") who's also known for his on-camera Comedy Central work that included the 2015-16 "The Nightly Show." His Peacock show is as-yet untitled.

"Apparently there's a lot going on in the world right now and a big election happening soon, so I'm happy to have a place in the conversation," Wilmore said in a statement. The shows are set to launch in September, with 11 episodes ordered for Wilmore's series and nine for Ruffin's, Peacock said.

"MacGruber," a parody skit on "Saturday Night Live" that became a movie, is coming back to the small screen.

The NBCUniversal streaming platform Peacock said Monday that Will Forte will once again play the mullet-haired hero for a new half-hour series.

Peacock said the series will follow MacGruber after rotting in prison for a decade as he hunts down a mysterious villain from his past.



In this Jan 23, 2020 file photo, Amber Ruffin attends the NBC midseason 2020 press day party in New York on Jan 23, 2020. Peacock is launching a pair of weekly late-night comedy series with Larry Wilmore and Ruffin. (AP)



Ray



Pratt

Variety

LOS ANGELES: Chris Pratt and Katherine Schwarzenegger say they are "beyond thrilled" and "extremely blessed" after she gave birth to their first child together.

The 41-year-old "Avengers" actor and the 30-year-old children's book author announced the birth of daughter Lyla Maria Schwarzenegger Pratt in a joint post on their Instagram accounts Monday.

The post included a photo of the hands of both parents and child. Pratt also has a 7-year-old son with his first wife, Anna Faris.

The baby is the granddaughter of Arnold Schwarzenegger and Maria Shriver. (AP)

NEW YORK: A massive fire engulfed cooking show star Rachael Ray's New York home, authorities said.

As many as 16 local fire departments responded to the fire at Ray's home in Lake Luzerne, New York, which started around 5:30 pm on Sunday, according to Brian LaFlure, fire coordinator for the Warren County Office of Emergency Services.

Photos of the house fire show flames bursting through the roof and long plumes of smoke extending into the sky. No one in Ray's household or from the responding firefighters were injured, LaFlure said.

"Thank you to our local first responders for being kind and gracious and saving what they could of our home," Ray posted on Twitter on Monday. "These are the days we all have to be grateful for what we have, not what we've lost."

Ray's representative Charlie Dougiello said in a statement that the extent of the damage to the home was not yet clear.

The home is located at the end of a private drive in a rural area that has no fire hydrants, so firefighters had to pump water from a nearby pond and transport it with tankers to extinguish the flames, LaFlure said.

The fire-fighting efforts lasted until around 3 am, he said.

Kenneth Dickinson, a 48-year-old former volunteer firefighter who responded to the fire at Ray's home, was listening to the fire and police scanner at his parent's house on Sunday when he heard a call go out.

"The way they were asking for, 'This truck from this place; this truck from that place,' I knew it was going to be a bad fire," he said.

Dickinson said he helped lay a 5-inch hose supplying water to the truck at the house and then took photos of flames licking the edges of the roof and blazing through one section. Investigators with the New York State

Theatre

'The experience is unique'

Intimate Theatre for One goes online

NEW YORK, Aug 11, (AP): The coronavirus hasn't stopped the world's smallest theater.

"Theatre for One", where one audience member sees one short play performed by a single actor in a portable theater, has now gone online.

"The experience is unique to Theatre for One. And in that sense, I think it's still a venue and a space. It's a space designed specifically for this interaction, now designed online," said two-time Tony-winning scenic designer Christine Jones, who conceived and leads the project.

In response to both the COVID-19 crisis and the Black Lives Matter movement, the company will feature microplays all written and directed by Black, indigenous and women of color.

A selection of the tiny plays will be performed every Thursday for a six-week run starting later this month, with each actor delivering up to 15 performances for a single audience member in the 90 minute window. It will be free to the public.

The company has embraced a custom online virtual platform designed by cutting-edge OpenEndedGroup and says it retains the one-on-one intimacy that made the physical shows so powerful. Audience members and actors will even be able to look into the other's eyes at the same time, something impossible for platforms like Zoom.

"It feels really unique in how every element of it is distilled and concentrated and thought through in how to heighten this experience with audience and performer," said co-Artistic Director Jenny Koons.

The custom designed digital platform will allow audience members and actors to interact more closely than on traditional online platforms. There will even be a virtual lobby where audience members can gather and chat before and after performances.

Until now, Theatre for One has always been resistant to suggestions to transform into an online experience. "The sense of presence between the two people and the liveness of the moment,

and that one-to-one contact, is so critical and essential a part of that experience that we just didn't see that it could translate," Jones said.

That thinking altered during the pandemic. Jones and Koons began discussing options for the company and how the notion of time was being altered and the concept of live was undergoing change. They came up with "Theatre for One: Here We Are".

"We just started talking and we realized, 'If we could bring the things about Theatre for One with us — that the intimacy, the surprise, the specificity and curation of the venue and the experience — then maybe it's something we would want to investigate.'"

Performances will begin on Aug 20 from 6 pm to 7:30 pm ET and will be held each subsequent Thursday through Sept 24.

Registration is free and open to the public starting Aug 17.

Contributing

The eight writers contributing new works — no more than 10 minutes each — are Jaclyn Backhaus, Lydia R. Diamond, Lynn Nottage, Stacey Rose, Nikkole Salter, DeLanna Studi, Regina Taylor and Carmelita Tropicana.

The directors include Tiffany Nichole Greene, Candis C. Jones, Rebecca Martinez, Taylor Reynolds and Tamilla Woodard. Mara Isaacs is the producer and the company is helped by Arts Brookfield with additional support from Thomas M. Neff.

It's just one way the theater community is trying to acknowledge the power of Black Lives Matter in theater, including the Black Theatre Coalition, While We Breathe, and Black Theatre United. It's also another example of theater companies trying out new ways to present works during a pandemic.

Jones has been working on the project for years, ever since a magician left her spellbound at a wedding reception by pulling a card she'd selected out of his mouth.

The physical booth is not being scrapped entirely — Theatre for One plans to park in Ireland this fall. Post-pandemic the company intends to explore both in-person and virtual experiences.

Also:

MANAGUA, Nicaragua: For four months, everything was virtual: the modeling and speech classes, the make-up courses and the emotional support session via videoconference. And when eight contestants vying to be Miss Nicaragua did finally start in-person practices, they did so with masks covering their faces. "We managed to organize the event under the pandemic with masks, social distancing and little money, (but) with talent and creativity," said Karen Celebertti, who has been running the pageant for two decades in Nicaragua.

On Saturday night, 23-year-old Ana Marcelo, an agroindustrial engineer from Esteli, was crowned Miss Nicaragua in front of a limited audience (two people per contestant spaced safely) plus a production crew of 85. The masks were off the contestants, but the judges wore them and were spaced at a safe distance.

There were portable handwashing stations and doctors taking temperatures.

Celebertti, herself a former local beauty queen, said they had to "reinvent" themselves to pull it off. The novel coronavirus arrived in March just days after they had selected the contestants. It was delayed from May to August to develop protocols that would allow them to compete safely. "We had trials and classes through Zoom, supervised by me from home," Celebertti said. "The girls had a speech coach, an image consultant and stylists online who taught them how to do their hair and put on makeup alone. There was no other option." In July, they had their first in-person practices, walks down the runway wearing masks. "Each session was supervised by doctors and no one got infected," she said.

Unlike the massive religious and sporting events allowed and even promoted by the government during the pandemic, the pageant decided to do without the usual boisterous audience cheering their support for the women.

"Some criticized me for doing this event, but we were very careful to be able to do it," Celebertti said.

"The truth is that the people need to see some good news, be entertained."

Office of Fire Prevention and Control arrived on Monday to help determine the cause of the fire, LaFlure said.

"It isn't suspicious or anything like that," LaFlure said, "But when we have a loss

of this size, we like to have them come in and help us out." Since April, Ray has been filming "#STAYHOME With Rachael" two days a week from her home in Lake Luzerne. Her husband, John Cusimano, has been the

show's cameraman, producer, cocktail maker and musical guest.

Amid the pandemic, Ray's organization donated \$4 million to several charities including food banks, relief funds for laid off restaurant workers and animal rescue work.

She credited her mother, who lives across the street and also operated a restaurant, with motivating her to give the donation.

"She wants a daily update of what you're doing to help the world. In detail," Ray said. (AP)



Lynn Nottage presents a performance by the cast of 'Sweat' at the 71st annual Tony Awards on June 11, 2017, in New York. Nottage is one of eight writers contributing new works to 'Theatre for One', a portable theatre that has now gone online where one audience member sees one short play performed by a single actor. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: James Harris, a Mississippi-born sharecropper who gained international fame as "Kamala the Ugandan Giant," a massive professional wrestler who buried opponents with his trademark "splash," has died.

World Wrestling Entertainment confirmed his death in a statement Sunday.

Kenny Casanova, who co-wrote Harris' autobiography, wrote on social media that Harris died from COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus. He was 70.

In recent years, Harris had suffered from many health ailments, including having both legs amputated because of diabetes. Born in Senatobia, Mississippi, the 6-foot-7-inch (2-meter), nearly 400-pound (181-kilogram) Harris began his wrestling career as Sugar Bear Harris and under other names but wasn't considered successful in the ring. It wasn't until a promoter suggested the Kamala gimmick loosely based on Ugandan dictator Idi Amin that his career took a turn. (AP)