

## BWW Reviews: Bay Street Theatre's TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

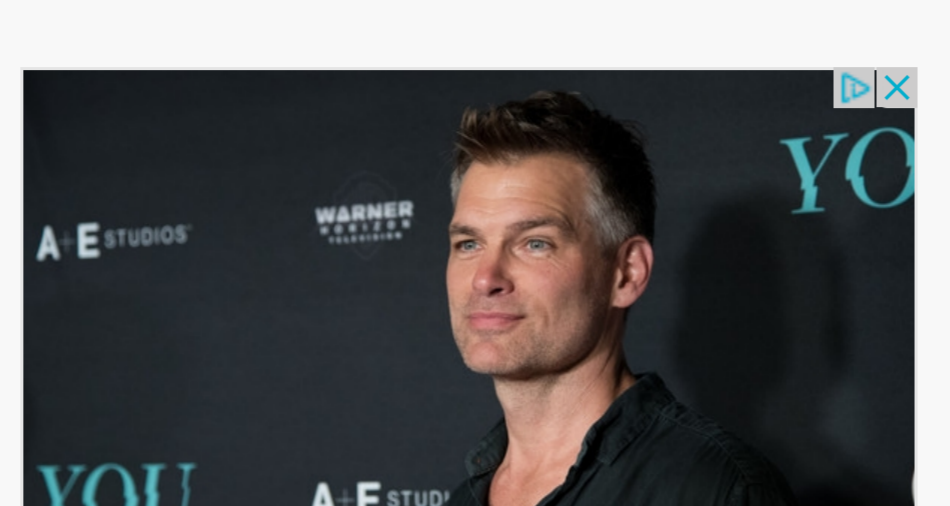
by Melissa Giordano Nov 13, 2014

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Harper Lee's classic novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* is indeed an astonishing tale and the staged incarnation is just as powerful as the book first published in 1960. The story is Lee's account of her own observations of her own family and neighborhood in addition to an event that occurred in/near her hometown in 1936, when she was 10 years old.

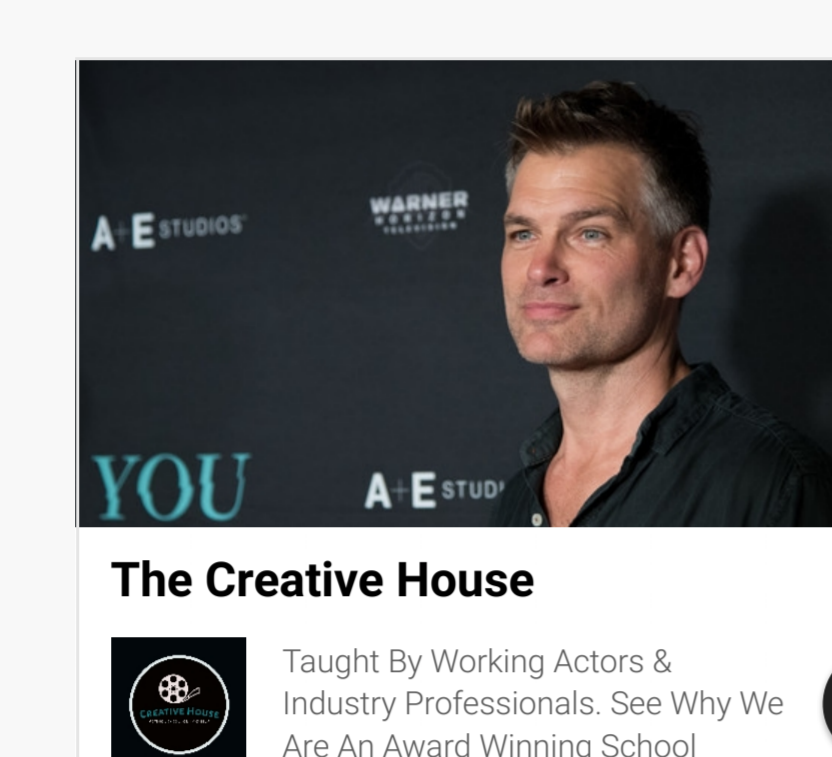
Bay Street Theatre's incarnation of the 90-minute play, directed by Joe Minutillo, runs through November 29th as part of their LITERATURE LIVE! program. According to the Sag Harbor venue's web site, www.baystreet.org, "LITERATURE LIVE! brings the power of the word from the page to the stage. Using curriculum-based literature, Bay Street Theater creates a unique learning experience by bringing professional theater artists together to present first class productions. The possibilities for insight and understanding of the subject matter are only increased when students can witness the characters from a great play or novel living and breathing and telling their stories right before their eyes". Even though this program is geared toward students, they also have weekend performances for the general public.

The gripping story is set in Maycomb County, Alabama, in the 1930's when the Great Depression and unemployment were widespread. We first see our narrator, Jean Louise Finch portrayed by **Chloe Dirksen**, who tells the troubled tale of her growing up around bigotry and injustice. We meet Jean as an adult, but she tells the story in flashback from when she was around eight years old. Jean, or Scout as she was called as a tom-boy child, is a strong willed person and we find that she didn't get caught up in that. Ms. Dirksen is superb in the role filled with tense emotion that will have you on the verge of tears.



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Scott Eck is also a highlight of the cast strongly portraying Scout's father Atticus, a prominent and respected lawyer. He takes on a huge case representing Tom Robinson, portrayed by **Chauncy Thomas**. Tom is a young black man accused of raping a young white woman (Mayella Ewell, portrayed by Jessica Montellaro). Actually, it's Mayella's father, Bob (Joe Pallister), who accuses Tom; Mayella just goes along with everything. **The character Bob seems to represent everything that is wrong with society; filled with hate, a complete drunk, imprudent, unemployable, ignorant... I could go on. He's downright irritating and Mr. Pallister portrays Bob well.**



Additionally, Mr. Thomas gives a startling performance as Tom. You will become overawed with emotions during the trial scene as he is ultimately proving his innocence but knows there's no hope. His is a performance you will remember, no doubt.

The whole cast, filled with Long Island actors, is truly top notch and they also made great use of the intimate theatre. Gary Hygom's set is divided into two sections. The right side of the stage is the front of the Finch's house and the left side is the front of the house of their neighbor, Miss Maudie (we only see the porch). For the trial scene, they bring in tables, chairs, and a judges platform and use the front of the stage. The stage is stunningly enhanced by Mike Billings' lighting and Barbara Oldak's costumes were relevant.

And so, Bay Street's *To Kill a Mocking Bird* is certainly a job well done. It isn't a happy story and adults may have to explain - and discouraged - some of the language and ideas in the story. This is an eye opener for kids to get some sort of feel of how terrible it was back then and to continually remind ourselves to live with compassion. Ultimately, this production with its great cast make for a stirring night of theatre.

*To Kill A Mockingbird* is presented by the Bay Street Theatre of Sag Harbor, Long Island, through November 29th. By Harper Lee, Adapted for the stage by Christopher Sergel, Directed by Joe Minutillo, Set Design by Gary Hygom, Lighting Design by Mike Billings, Costume Design by Barbara Oldak, Stage Management by Lindsey Alexander. For more information and to purchase tickets, please call 631-725-9500 or visit www.baystreet.org.

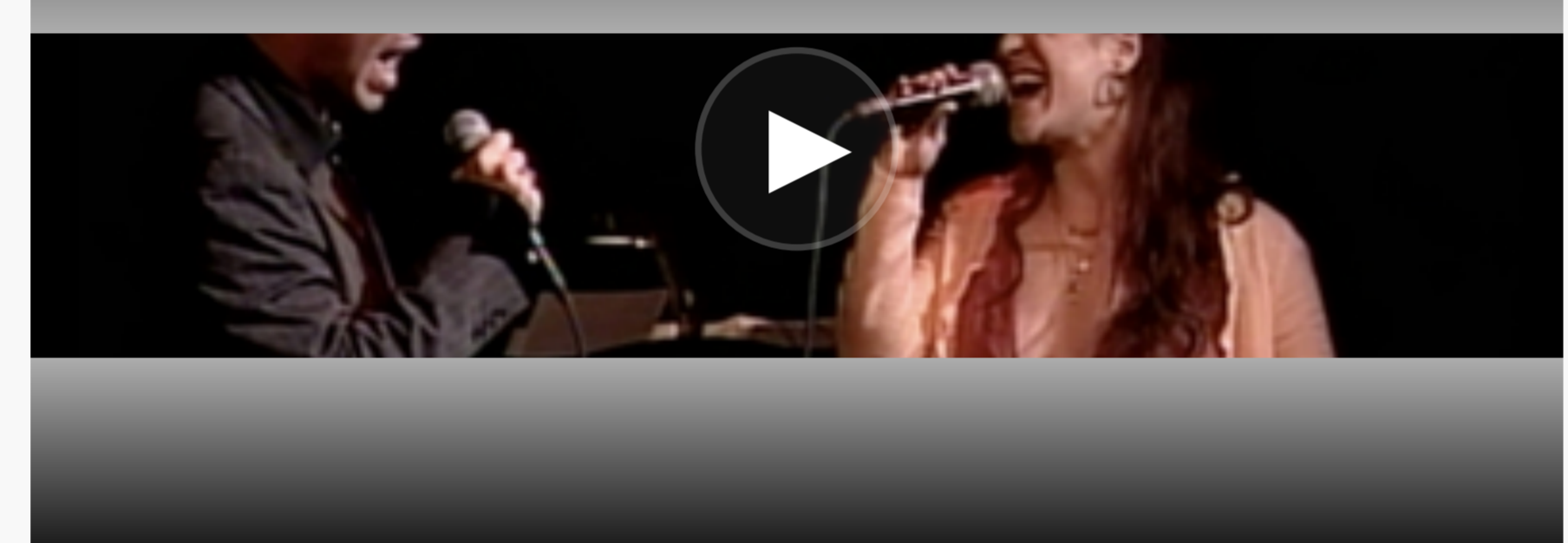
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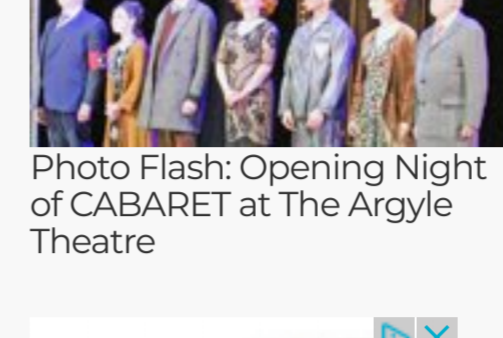
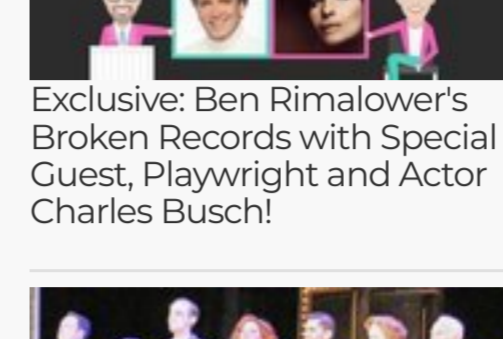
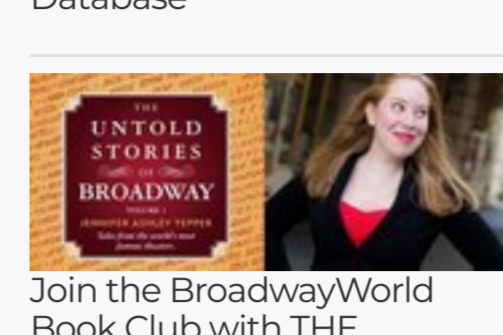
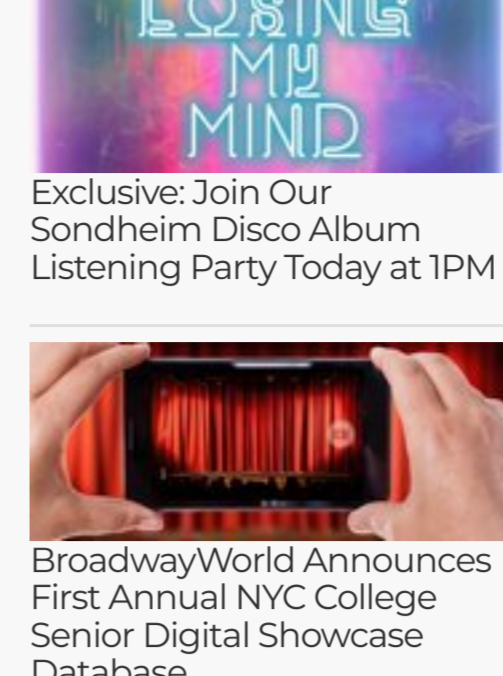
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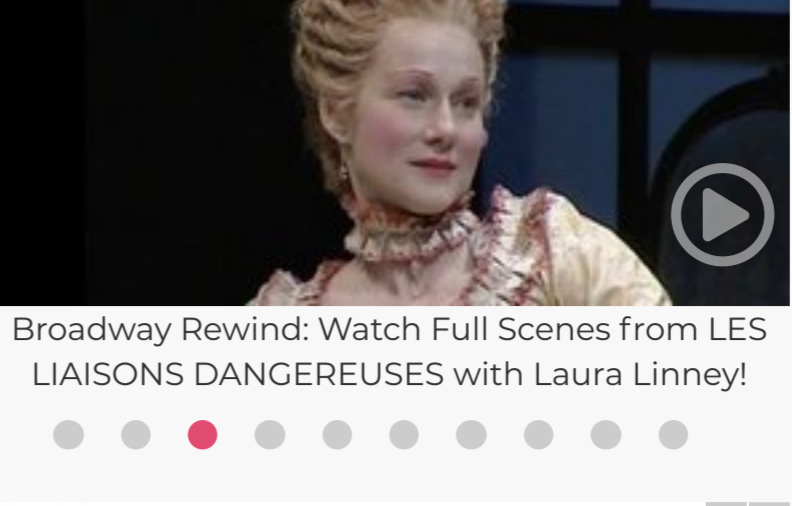
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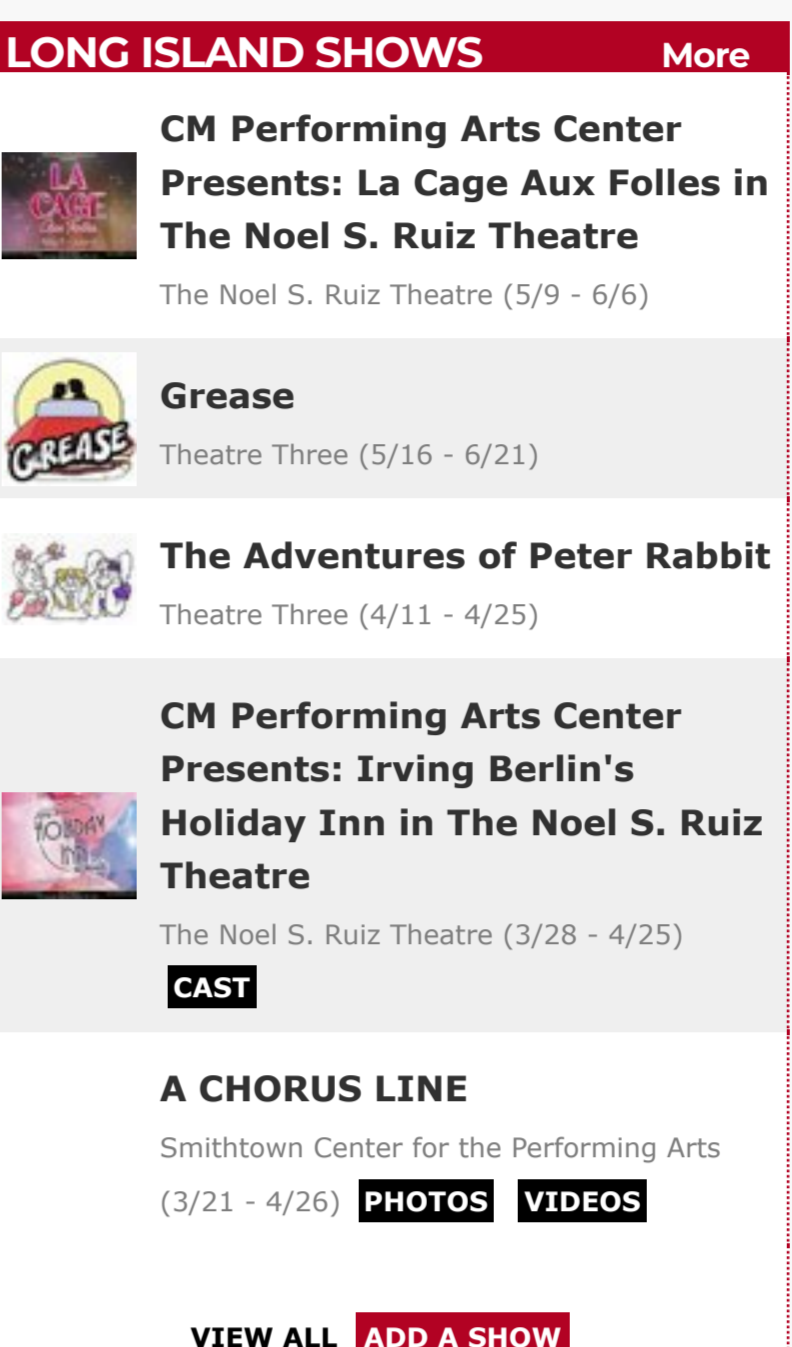
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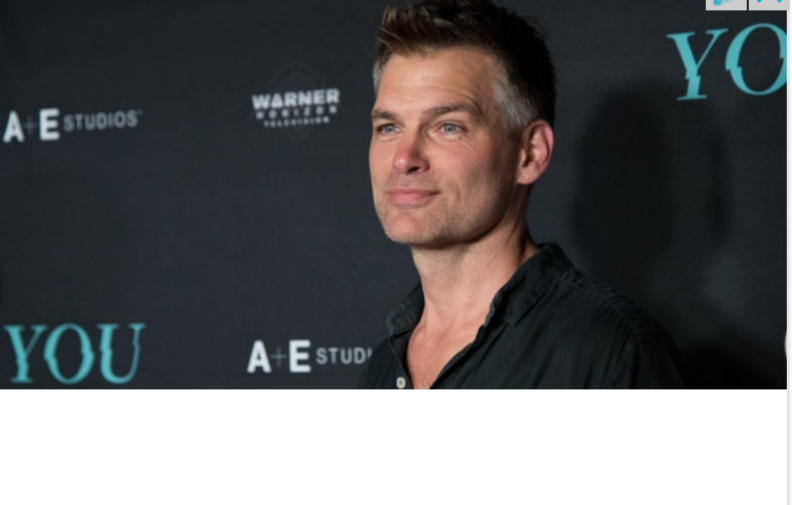
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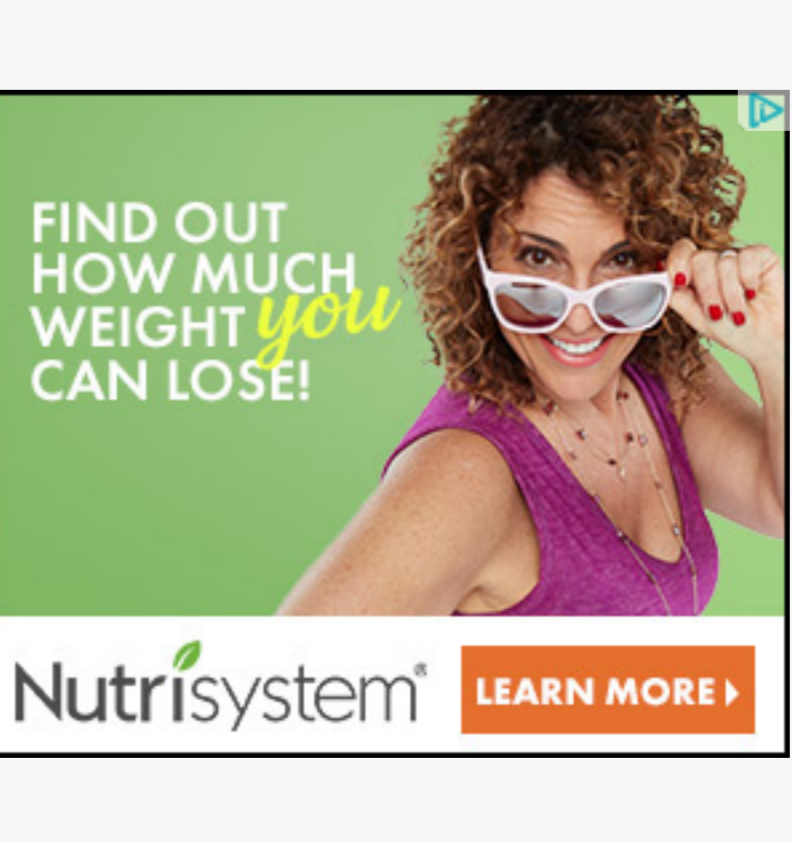
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