

ENTERTAINMENT & LIFESTYLE



EastLine Theatre Brings *Angels In America* To Long Island

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Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes, is a two-part, Pulitzer prize-winning play written by Tony Kushner. It was first performed in 1991, and it follows a gay man who was abandoned by his lover when he contracts HIV, the crumbling of a closeted Mormon's marriage whose wife is slowly entering a nervous breakdown, a mother's search for her son in the big city and a nurse who tends to a corrupt lawyer who battles the ghosts of his past.



Julie Fergus, playing the Angel, rehearses a scene with Logan Clingan, who is playing Prior Walter.
(Photo by Jennifer Corr)

EastLine Theatre, based in Wantagh, will be putting both parts of this show on at the BACCA Center in Lindenhurst throughout the month of February. It is believed to be the first performance of *Angels in America* on Long Island.

Long Island Weekly on Jan. 20 sat down via Zoom with Nicole Savin, Eastline's co-artistic director, Danny Higgins, the director of "*Angels in America*," actress Thea Kraus who is playing character Harper Pitt and actor Logan Clingan, who is playing character Prior Walter.

"[*Angels in America*] is one of the greatest plays ever written," Higgins said. "It is ambition, for what it requires, and the possibility of doing it in our local community, which is has never been done, checked a lot of boxes for us. EastLine is celebrating its 10 year anniversary. All

roads led to *Angels in America*."

It's been a longtime coming for all those involved with "*Angels in America*," as the planning for the production began a year ago. Auditions were held in July, and rehearsals, with just how lengthy this production is, began in September. And two weeks ahead of the Feb. 4 premiere, cast and crew moved into the BAACA Center for technical rehearsals.

"I think it's exciting," Clingan said when asked how they felt being weeks away from the premiere. "These characters are just once in a lifetime opportunities to play and even just from the first rehearsal, it slowly gets more anticipating as time goes on."

Kraus echoed Clingan's point, adding that its just as nerve wracking as it is exciting. She described her character, Harper Pitt, as an "agoraphobic Valium addict" and wacky.

"She's sort of one of the people whose always on the outskirts of society," Kraus said. "She approaches it with such, 'yep, that's who I am and there's nothing I can do about it, and my life is falling apart in front of my eyes and there's nothing I can do about it, but I'm handling it.' And while she doesn't do it gracefully, she does it. And that's what matters."

Clingan discussed their opening scene with their character, Prior Walter, who is telling their partner that he has AIDS.

"From there on out, Prior is physically going through a downward spiral, but tries the best to not let that hurt him emotionally and still has this positive, beautiful light that continues to radiate throughout the play, even when his boyfriend leaves him," Clingan said. "He's kind of suffering through this alone. He still finds light through these people he never met before,

through Harper and through [the character Hannah Pitt]. I think that's what I love about the role the most is that the trajectory is going through the darkest thing you could ever imagine going through, but still not letting it consume you."

On the process of putting together this production, Higgins said that it first, it felt unobtainable in what it requires of the cast and the production team, who Higgins said is happily getting very little sleep.

"We have really tried to make Long Island the heart of our organization," Savin reflected. "We feel that we as an island deserve culture, as high quality theater that the city can get and what's different about is... that we are really trying to do works that you would otherwise not see on Long Island."

To get tickets to see both parts of *Angels in America*, visit eastlinetheatre.org.



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