



SCHOOL OF THE ARTS FOR MOTION PICTURES AND BROADCASTING

G-STAR SCHOOL OF THE ARTS FOR MOTION PICTURES AND BROADCASTING
2030 South Congress Avenue
West Palm Beach, Florida 33406

PRESS RELEASE

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Onstage: G-STAR gives birth to new theater companies

By [Hap Erstein](#)

Palm Beach Post Theater Writer

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G-STAR School of the Arts is about to give birth — to two new professional theater companies.

The campus of the charter school in West Palm Beach was originally the site of a water utility station, with a large printing plant, presumably to churn out water and sewage bills. But the presses have been removed, the building has been turned into a "black box" theater, *The Loading Dock Theatre*, and now come the stage companies — **Rude Mechanical Productions** and **The New Group Theatre**.

The former was created by three G-STAR teachers from the acting department — **Ray Conrad, Jeff Bower** and **Clint Merritt**. They are the co-artistic directors of a troupe dedicated to attracting audience members in their 20s and 30s who have yet to catch the theatergoing habit.

"We found that a lot of people in our generation are not so experienced at seeing theater first-hand, so we're going to try and attract them," says Merritt.

"There's just a stigma that goes along with theater, that it can't be fun, it can't be youthful," notes Bower. "We really want to have that sense of fun and that sense of community."

The group's name, as you Shakespeare buffs already know, refers to the low comic characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

"We're all huge fans of Shakespeare," explains Conrad. "How much fun that troupe has in that play, that's a metaphor for what we want as well. Sure, they're clumsy, but they get the job done."

The local Rude Mechanicals will debut on Thursday with a four-day, five-performance engagement of three one-act plays collectively known as *Girls, Fire and Philly*. Individually, that includes Ralph Pape's *Girls We Have Known*, a cross-country driving trip between two reunited friends who drink and discuss the women in their lives, and David Ives' *Philadelphia*, about a guy going through a monumentally bad day, shackled by a curse named after the City of Brotherly Love. **The expected crowd-pleaser, though, is the world premiere of John Hodgman's *Fire: The Next Sharp Stick?*, the comic tale of three cavemen, one of whom is trying to sell the new-fangled invention, fire, to two sales-resistant Neanderthals.**

Although they are starting with a bill heavy in comedy, the Rude Mechanicals want to branch out into all theatrical genres. They are slated to return in December with the seasonal *Reindeer Monologues* and again in March with

The Compleat Wrks of Wlm Shkspr (Abridged).

Girls, Fire and Philly, Rude Mechanical Productions, G-Star School of the Arts, 2030 Congress Ave., West Palm Beach, Sept. 8-11. Tickets: \$15, \$10 for students. Phone: (561) 632-8842.

A View from The New Group: The other company starting up at G-STAR was also started by a teacher, local acting coach **Joe Petrullo**, who has appeared in many movies including *The Godfather*. He was already busy enough teaching acting at the **Burt Reynolds and Friends Museum** in Jupiter, but wanted to fill a void he felt existed for serious drama in South Florida. So he founded The New Group Theatre, to apply the techniques that he learned years ago from his own teacher, **Stella Adler**.

The New Group lands in the G-STAR black box on Sept. 16, for three days, with **Arthur Miller's A View From the Bridge**, about a jealous Brooklyn dock worker infatuated with an orphaned niece he and his wife raised.

Petrullo was not planning to be in the cast, but when the actor playing the leading role of Eddie Carbone dropped out, Petrullo filled that void, too.

A View From the Bridge, The New Group Theatre, G-Star School of the Arts, 2030 Congress Ave., West Palm Beach, Sept. 16-18. Tickets: \$20. Phone: (561) 635-6386.

CONTACT: Greg Hauptner
G-STAR Motion Picture Studios
561-386-6275