

Thespian-Caterers Take to the Stage

by Pia Catton

GREAT PERFORMANCES—the catering company that provides flexible work to a roster of about 600 actors, singers and assorted theater folk—is taking to the boards for the first time in its more than 30 year history.

On January 24 and 25, about 20 thespian-caterers are presenting Stephen Sondheim's "Into the Woods" at the CSV Cultural Center's Flamboyán Theatre on the Lower East Side. Tickets are \$25, on sale via Brown Paper Tickets.

"We always joke that we'll do a show together," said actor Kevin Horne, who is a lead captain for GREAT PERFORMANCES' catering events and is producing and directing the show. "Last spring we were batting this idea around seriously."

"Into the Woods" was an easy choice: Not only is it an ensemble show, it was a dream shot at a Sondheim musical. Actress Molly Walsh, who started waitressing for GREAT PERFORMANCES four years ago and has a touring production of "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" among her credits, is taking on the role of the Witch with pleasure: "I've studied Sondheim for as long as I can

remember, but the opportunities to do his work are few and far between."

Instead of traditional auditions, the play was cast according to how people matched the show's fairy tale characters. "We typecast the entire show based on the personalities," Mr. Horne said. "In that way, the casting was extremely easy because there were so many people who just scream a certain role."

In an effort to "make it not a narcissistic exercise," said Mr. Horne, the group decided it would be a benefit for the Sylvia Center, a garden-to-table program that teaches children about nutrition and was founded by Liz Neumark, CEO of GREAT PERFORMANCES.

Ms. Neumark

incorporated GREAT PERFORMANCES in 1979 when she herself was a struggling artist. Why did it take so long for a show to emerge? "It's a group that comes and goes," she said. "A few key voices found themselves together." When she was told that a production was coming together, she said she was speechless. "It's like when you have a family and your kids actually like each other," she said. "It made me feel like we'd done something right."

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