

New troupe hopes to raise bar

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Windsor's legal community has added clout, plus a little showbiz flair, to a new arts venture, Actors Theatre of Windsor (ATW).

Lawyers, judges and community leaders, including Mayor Eddie Francis, will perform a staged reading of *Inherit the Wind* at 8 p.m. Friday at Chrysler Theatre, Cleary International Centre, to benefit ATW and the Centre for Studies in Social Justice.

"I feel strongly about both causes," said social activist, Madeline Crnec, who plays the role of defence lawyer Henry Drummond in the play based on the 1920s Scopes monkey trial.

"Actors Theatre of Windsor is a wonderful idea," said Crnec, who was educated as a lawyer but works as a chiropractor and operates Ottawa Mall Healing Arts Centre.

Crnec knows a little something about getting up on a soapbox, too. Her character in *Inherit the Wind* argues against injustice -- "As a lawyer, of course I was familiar with Clarence Darrow, who inspired this character." It was the role played by Spencer Tracy in the 1960 film.

Crnec was the host of *Take Back the Night*, a 2003 rally protesting violence against women. She also ran for the NDP in the riding of Windsor-St. Clair in the 2003 provincial election.

ATW is the brainchild of Mona el Baroudi and Gordon Mackenzie, two actors who want to establish a full-time equity theatre organization in Windsor.

The plans call for a summer season of three shows in 2007, using resources in Windsor and Detroit, said el Baroudi. ATW has established an advisory board of influential acting professionals and community theatre representatives.

All ATW productions will pay cast and crew and will provide work for union and non-union actors. It will also allow for synergies between the more than 20 professional, semi-professional and amateur companies in Windsor and Essex County, said el Baroudi.

The cast of *Inherit the Wind*, which was directed by el Baroudi, features several lawyers with stage experience, including Windsor Light Opera's Gerry Udell and Kingsville Repertory Players' Ken Marley. Retired Judge Saul Nosanchuk, a longtime supporter of the arts in Windsor, will make a cameo appearance.

A cast of dozens includes Jay Armeland, Wayne Lessard, Leslie McCurdy, Howard Pawley, Sharon Strosberg, Victoria Cross, Frank Montello and Norma Coleman.

"We want to raise the bar for the arts in this community," said el Baroudi.

Inherit the Wind is a media-friendly event to raise awareness of ATW, she said. The group plans more events leading up to next summer's launch.

For more information about ATW, call el Baroudi at 519-258-2684, or e-mail her at actorstheatreofwindsor@hotmail.com.

Tickets for Inherit the Wind are \$40, \$25, and \$15 at the Chrysler box office, 121 Ferry St. (519-252-6579).

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