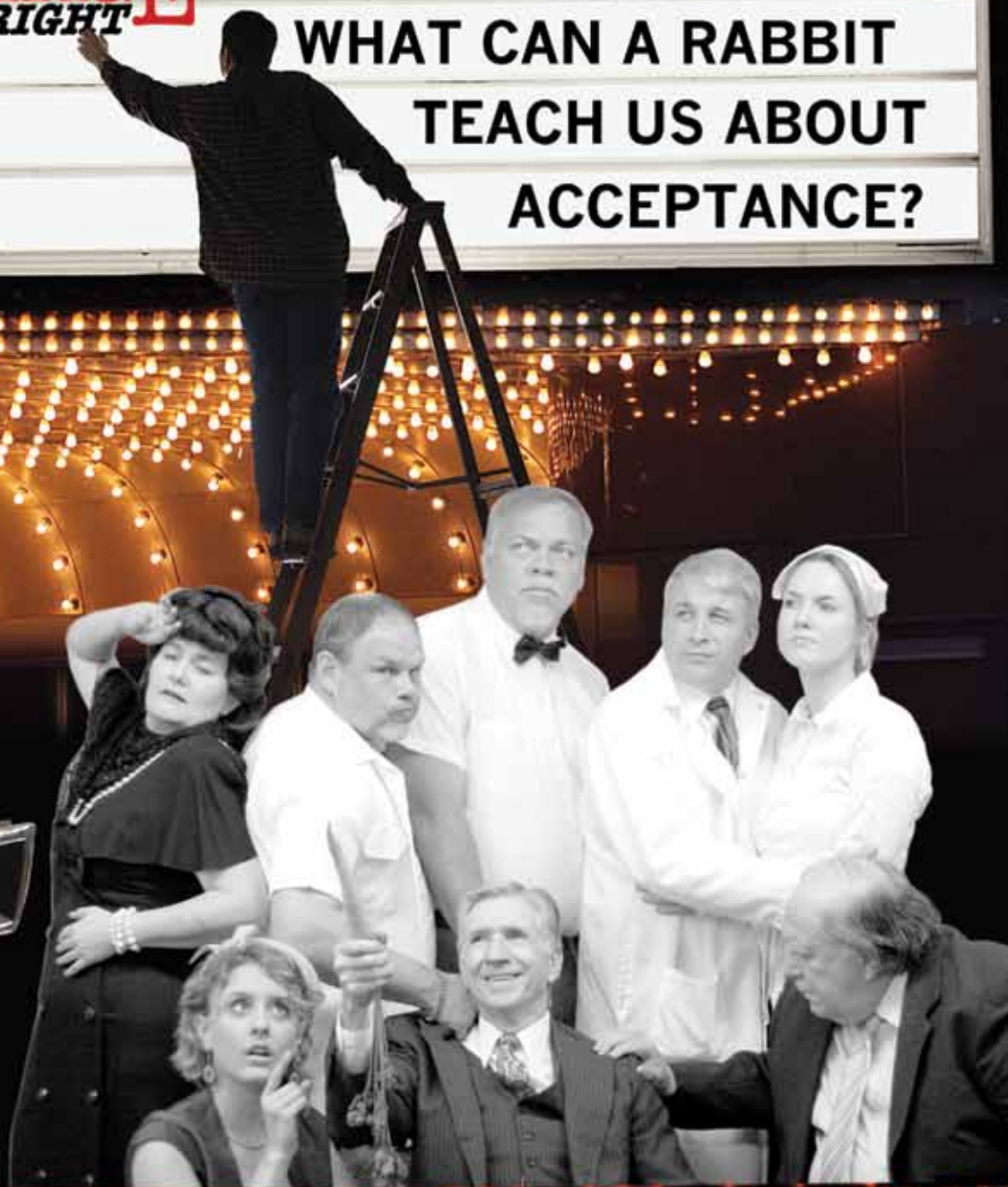


WAY

STAGE RIGHT

ASKS:

WHAT CAN A RABBIT TEACH US ABOUT ACCEPTANCE?



Harvey Cast: Top (l-r) Maria O. Sirgo as Veta Louise Simmons, Travis Bryant as Duane Wilson, Steve Murphree as Judge Omar Gaffney, Mike Anderson as Lyman Sanderson, M.D., Megan Nix as Ruth Kelly R.N.
Lower (l-r) Meredith Zaritski as Myrtle Mae Simmons, Gerald Livingston as Elwood P. Dowd, and Willard (Will) Radcliffe as William R. Chumley, M.D.
Missing: Renee Cannon as Ms. Johnson, Cindy Tippens as Mrs. Ethel Chauvenet & Steven Dowell as E.J. Lofgren

By: Steven Wong

Springtime in Texas is one of the most pleasant times of the year. The wildflowers are starting to bloom and the weather is moderate. One of my most vivid memories of spring was that of an Easter egg hunt at school (having an Easter egg hunt at school shows you how long ago that

was!). Each of us was to bring two colored Easter eggs. The eggs would be collected and hidden on the playground. At the appointed time we would be released to find our Easter eggs.

Continued on page 28

As in all games, the rules are subject to interpretation. In my case, I understood that I was to find my Easter eggs. Specifically, I needed to find the same eggs that I

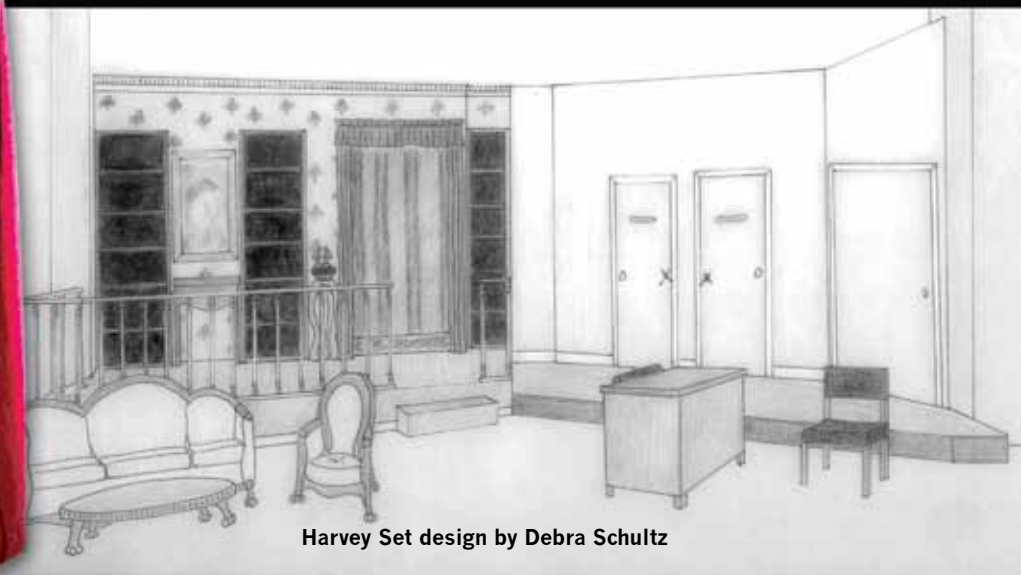
had colored and brought to class. After hiding the eggs, Mrs. May- my teacher -released us to find our Easter eggs.

I was the first kid out the door. I saw many Easter eggs but did not pick up a single one. After all, none of them were mine. I couldn't tell the difference between my egg and all of the many colored eggs around me. Mrs. May sensed my frustration and set aside two eggs just for me. No one was allowed to touch them. She

gently pointed out the eggs to me and motioned that I should take them. I refused. After all, they were not my eggs. She told me to take them anyway.

We can look back at our experiences as kids and laugh at ourselves. However, the gift of acceptance – whether of rules that are different than we expected, situations that didn't turn out the way we planned, or people that act differently than we would – is one we must constantly relearn.

Harvey is a play about acceptance. Perhaps you remember the film version with Jimmy Stewart as Elwood P. Dowd. Others prefer the updated version with Harry Anderson and Leslie Nielsen. Elwood P. Dowd is an likeable man who claims to have an unseen friend Harvey — whom Elwood describes as a six-foot, three-and-one-half-inch tall pooka resembling an oversized rabbit. Elwood introduces Harvey to everyone he



Harvey Set design by Debra Schultz

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meets. His social-climbing sister, Veta, increasingly finds his eccentric behavior embarrassing. She decides to have him committed to a sanitarium to spare her daughter Myrtle Mae and their family from future embarrassment.

A comedy of errors ensues as the doctors commit Veta instead of Elwood. The truth comes out and the search is on for Elwood and his invisible companion. When Elwood shows up at the sanitarium looking for his lost friend Harvey, Elwood's apparent delusion has a strange influence on the staff, including Dr. Chumley and his medical partner Dr. Sanderson. Only just before Elwood is to be given an injection that will make him into a "perfectly normal human being" does Veta realize that she'd rather have Elwood the same as he's always been — carefree and kind — even if it means living with Harvey.

Mary Chase's Pulitzer Prize winning *Harvey* is a piece of American theatre history, but for most people their only experience with the work is the 1950 film starring Jimmy Stewart. The director — Sam Martinez — plans to use the audience's familiarity with the movie as a way to engage them. The characters and sets and costumes and all will not be as in the movie—because you can't—but he will create

the world of Elwood and Veta Louise and Dr. Chumley that is comfortable. The look and feel of the show is that of a black and white movie, but the play is all theatre.

See Harvey at the historic Crighton Theatre (www.stage-right.org) from April 22- May 8, 2011. And bring some canned food for the Montgomery County Food Bank and for Elwood's pooka! ♦



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