

For Immediate Release. Please contact Daisy Blake for interviews or questions, on 801.604.7845, or daisyvalentineblake@hotmail.com. Photographs to follow.

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah, Jan. 4, 2017 – Pygmalion Theatre Company continues its season with “I and You,” by playwright Lauren Gunderson, directed by Teresa Sanderson, from Feb. 2-17 at the Rose Wagner Performing Arts Center, Black Box Theatre.

One afternoon, Anthony arrives unexpectedly at classmate Caroline’s door bearing a beat-up copy of Walt Whitman’s Leaves of Grass and an urgent assignment from their English teacher. Home-bound due to illness, Caroline hasn’t been to school in months, but she is as quick and sardonic as Anthony is athletic, sensitive and popular. As these two let down their guards and share their secrets, this seemingly mundane poetry project unlocks a much deeper mystery that has brought them together. “I and You” is an ode to youth, life, love and the strange beauty of human connection.

Director Sanderson said the script is one of the best she has ever read.

“I fell in love,” she said. She added she’s looking forward to working with younger actors; Cora Fossen, who plays Caroline, is 18 and a high school senior, and Tristan Johnson, who plays Anthony, is 21 and a student at Westminster.

“Young actors rock,” Sanderson said. “Okay ALL actors rock, but young actors tend to be open and bright and giving. Honestly, those people that say ‘kids today’ don’t hang out with enough kids.”

Fossen said she started acting in earnest about a year ago, after growing up being a dancer, and “I and You” is her first professional show. “I’ve been ridiculously lucky to have the opportunities I’ve had so early on in my career, and I can’t wait to keep learning about acting,” she said. “This is my first professional show, and I couldn’t have asked for a more perfect production to start my professional career with.”

She said what particularly spoke to her about the show is how “real” it feels.

“As a teenager, a lot of the plays or movies geared towards my friends can feel contrived and pandering, but this show feels like Lauren Gunderson perfectly captures what it’s like to be a young person now,” Fossen said. “It reminds me of a John Green novel, but with characters that are a lot more interesting and layered. I can really relate to Caroline’s story, and when I finished reading, I knew I had to somehow help tell it before my theatre career was over.”

And Fossen adds she feels the show is particularly relevant in our current social climate. “Whitman’s ‘Leaves of Grass’ is about unity in a time where divisiveness is the norm, and Caroline and Anthony are an amazing example of that kind of unity,” she added. “They both come from very different backgrounds, but they have far more in common than they realize. When we want to find ways to separate ourselves from people who are different from us, these teenagers are a model for listening and learning about others before we make judgements.”

Fossen said she thinks young audiences will particularly appreciate the play. "It's the perfect mix of funny and serious, and the characters are a ton of fun to watch interact," she said. "The show never really slows down or gets dull, and I know that some of my young friends will love that about it, especially since a lot of the plays we're exposed to in school are stuffy classical dramas. I think a young person watching the show will be able to see parts of themselves scattered through both Caroline and Anthony, and I hope they'll go home talking about the show. This is a show that is definitely going to stick with people, and I can't wait to see how they react to it!"

Johnson has been acting since the age of ten, and has appeared in seven professional shows. He said he felt strongly he wanted to tell Anthony's story.

"The growth and development of this character and his relationship with Caroline is fascinating and something I'm very excited to explore," he said. "I'm just looking forward to exploring Anthony as much as I can. I'm excited to work with Teresa and Cora, and make discoveries with the two of them throughout the rehearsal process."

Johnson added that he appreciates that the story explores how the unexpected can sometimes be exactly what you need. "I think it definitely will speak to younger audiences; Lauren Gunderson does an amazing job using language to really show the youth of these characters and I think it's something younger audiences will really relate to," he said.

Sanderson added that she feels the show will appeal to a wide range of people.

"We all like to see shows about 'us'; this is a story about letting someone in, needing another human," she said. "Simple story and one we all can relate to."

Who: Pygmalion Productions Theatre Company

What: "I and You"

When: Feb. 2-17, Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m., Sunday at 2 p.m. with an extra matinee Feb. 17 at 2 p.m.

Where: Rose Wagner Performing Arts Center, Black Box Theatre, 138 W. 300 South

Tickets: \$15-\$20 from (801) 355.ARTS (2787) or Artsaltlake.org