



Santa Monica's Morgan–Wixson Theatre

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www.morgan-wixson.org

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The Morgan-Wixson Mainstage proudly presents
the sultry, daring Jazz Age musical

Andrew Lippa's *The Wild Party*

Santa Monica, CA – Feb. 11, 2020

Andrew Lippa's *The Wild Party* will be presented at the Morgan-Wixson Theatre, opening on March 14 and running through April 11 as part of the 2019-20 Mainstage season. With book, music and lyrics by Andrew Lippa, directed by Kristin Towers-Rowles, produced by Spencer Johnson and Kristie Mattsson, choreographed by Michael Marchak, music direction by Daniel Koh, intimacy direction by Mia Schachter, and stage managed by Ryan Rowles.

The cast features, in alphabetical order: Deonté Allen, Mirai Booth-Ong, Kelly Ciurczak, Krystal Jasmine Combs, Katelyn Coon, Erika Cruz, Kaitlin Doughty, Eric Eberle, Javon Ford, Sam Gianfala, Spencer Johnson, Roy Kitaoka, Daniel Koh, Timanii Meeks, Viktor Pacheco, Serenity Robb, Angelica Roque, Jonathon Saia, Emily Sotelo and H. Davis Weaver.

Andrew Lippa's *The Wild Party* tells the story of one tragic, decadent night in a New York apartment shared by Queenie and her menacing lover, Burrs. The couple decides to throw the party to end all parties where Queenie meets a handsome stranger who wants to lure her away. Lust, jealousy, deception, drugs, sex, and violence all play out against the backdrop of Manhattan during the Roaring Twenties and Prohibition, just one year before Crash of 1929. This darkly brilliant show won a slew of awards and its thrilling, pitch-perfect score has become a modern-day classic, which is why Kristin Towers-Rowles, who directs this Morgan-Wixson production and has performed in the

show previously, says *The Wild Party* has become a favorite of performers and directors who like to reach past the formulas of the genre.

“It is such a phenomenal piece of art,” she said. “It pushes the boundaries of what most actors view as musical theater.”

The Wild Party is based on a narrative poem that Joseph Moncure March wrote in 1926 which was considered too racy to publish until two years later. The musical debuted Off-Broadway in 2000 with a cast that included Idina Menzel, Brian d’Arcy James, and Taye Diggs. Theater buffs might remember that another musical based on the same material came out nearly at the same time.

Towers-Rowles said the Jazz Age and the 1920s are often the setting of madcap musical comedies, a la *The Drowsy Chaperone*. But *The Wild Party*’s story has many facets that make it relevant to the current era of the Time’s Up movement and the severe racial and political division that plays out every day in the news.

“You’ve got a leading character (Queenie) who is stuck in an abusive situation, a person of color (Mr. Black) who is immediately ‘the other’ when he makes his entrance, a lesbian, and others, all outcasts who have found each other.”

The director said that despite the intensely dark material, the play, ultimately, is hopeful. And she is confident that her “very talented cast” will let that come through.

Only two weeks into rehearsal, “they’re already doing amazing work,” Towers-Rowles said. “And I’m excited that many of our performers are new to the Morgan-Wixson stage.”

Speaking of new, *The Wild Party* marks the first time a production at the Morgan-Wixson has worked with an intimacy director, a specialist in the choreography of scenes involving a range of intimacy. The craft has gained notoriety in the #metoo era but dates back as far as 2006.

In a briefing for the entire cast, Intimacy Director Mia Schachter explained that working on intimacy for the stage is not just about “the moment” and feeling safe in it. It’s about how performers prepare for it and how they care for themselves afterward.

For example, she took the cast through an exercise to illustrate how to deal with boundaries that are broken in the course of performing. “Saying ‘it was an accident’ or ‘I was in the moment’ negates the impact,” she said, when a “thank you for telling me” and a vow to not let it happen again can lead to healing and better trust.

Schachter’s body of knowledge is certified by the Intimacy Professionals Association.

Deonté Allen, who plays Mr. Black, said the benefit of Schachter’s direction became immediately apparent.

“It just feels necessary, for both the giver and the receiver in a scene,” he said. “It really taught me to ask myself: ‘To what level can we do this comfortably?’ and know that the answer could be different from day to day and from person to person.”

As for the performance, how does a production represent dark, sultry, and sometimes dangerous sexuality at a family-friendly community theater like the Morgan-Wixson? Both Director Towers-Rowles and Intimacy Director Schachter stressed that the more graphic moments of the show will seek to evoke, rather than simulate.

“Michael (Choreographer Marchak) has a great feel for this show and is already using movement, placement and light to make it clear what is going on without vulgarity,” Towers-Rowles said. That being said, the subject matter of the show makes it appropriate for mature audiences only.

The Wild Party is presented by Santa Monica’s Morgan-Wixson Theatre, 2627 Pico Blvd., March 14 through April 11, Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. Adults \$30, Seniors \$26, Students \$23. For tickets, visit www.morgan-wixson.org or call (310) 828-7519.

Easy, free parking is available a block west of the theater. There are lots of great restaurants within walking distance. Group rates are available — call the box office for details.

To schedule press interviews, request photos or press comps, please contact publicity@morgan-wixson.org.

JUST THE FACTS

Andrew Lippa’s The Wild Party

Book, Music and Lyrics by Andrew Lippa

Directed by Kristin Towers-Rowles

Produced by Spencer Johnson and Kristie Mattsson

Choreography by Michael Marchak

Musical Direction by Daniel Koh

Intimacy Direction by Mia Schachter

Fight Choreography by Amanda Newman

Costume Design by Michael Mullen

Set Design by Yelena Babinskaya

Lighting Design by Derek Jones

Wig Design by Alejandro Bermudez

Stage Managed by Ryan Rowles

- WHAT:** *Andrew Lippa’s The Wild Party*
- WHEN:** March 14-April 11
Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m.
- WHERE:** The Morgan-Wixson Theatre, 2627 Pico Boulevard, Santa Monica 90405.
Free parking available at 2509 Pico Blvd.
- HOW:** Reserved seats available at www.morgan-wixson.org
or by phone at 310-828-7519 or by email at mwtboxoffice@gmail.com.
Adults \$30, Seniors \$26, Students \$23.
- WHO:** Contains explicit language, strong sexual themes, drugs use, and violence. For mature audiences only.

ABOUT THE MORGAN-WIXSON THEATRE

History

Santa Monica's Morgan-Wixson Theatre is the oldest theatrical organization in the city, founded in 1946. Originally known as Santa Monica Theatre Guild, its first home was the Miles Playhouse. In 1950, the group moved to an abandoned naval facility at 5th Street and Ocean Park Boulevard, near what is now the Muir/SMASH school site. Community members converted the building to the Ranch Playhouse, later renamed the Morgan Theatre in honor of prominent Santa Monican Geoffrey Morgan, who had helped to secure the site. For many years the Morgan Theatre was the center of live theatre in Santa Monica, until 1962 when a fire destroyed the building. Fortunately, the organization had been thrifty over the years and could purchase land on Pico Boulevard. In 1966, the group built the building you are in today, using mostly volunteer labor. Since 1979, it has been known as the Morgan-Wixson Theatre, after the death of dedicated member Mel Wixson, who passed away shortly after performing on the Morgan stage.

Prominent Performers

1947 saw a very young **James Dean** onstage in *The Romance of Scarlet Gulch*. **Harvey Korman** appeared as *Hamlet* in 1955. Our revival of the play *Green Grow the Lilacs*, the basis for *Oklahoma*, featured music composed by a young **Rod McKuen**. **Joyce DeWitt** was "discovered" and cast in *Three's Company* when she starred in *Sweet Charity*. **David Mamet** conducted rehearsals for the world premiere of his play *Doctor Faustus* and children's musician **Dan Crow** recorded his live album "Oops!" at our facility. Broadway and film actress **Beanie Feldstein** starred as the title role in our youth production of *Thoroughly Modern Millie*.

Programming

The MWT is a busy enterprise structured around a diverse annual season of Mainstage plays and musicals for general audiences. Recent Mainstage productions have included the plays *It's Only a Play*, *The 39 Steps*, *And Then There Were None*, *Boeing Boeing*, *Moon Over Buffalo*, and musicals *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *The Wedding Singer*, *She Loves Me*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Mary Poppins*, *Peter And The Starcatcher*, *The Addams Family*, and *Seussical the Musical*.

Our Youth Education/Entertainment Series (Y.E.S.) strives to engage young audiences and train young talent. Y.E.S. was selected as *Outstanding New Children's Theatre Company* in the nation in 2008 by the American Alliance for Theatre and Education. Y.E.S. has also won numerous National Youth Arts awards for its productions.

Y.E.S. shows are based on children's literature, such as Julianne Moore's *Freckleface Strawberry*, Kate DiCamillo's *Mercy Watson*, Eleanor Estes' *The Hundred Dresses*, Barbara Parks' *Junie B. Jones*, E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, and Hans Christian Andersen's *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Our big Youth Musical presented every autumn features Broadway favorites such as *Legally Blonde*, *42nd Street*, *White Christmas*, and *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. Y.E.S. hosts field trips so that local schoolchildren can see a live play in a real theatre, often for the first time, based on books they read. The building is also the home of long-time tenants Kids on Stage

and Westside Children's Theatre which offer creative dramatics classes for youth. The Morgan-Wixson is also a favorite venue for Persian and flamenco music and dance as well as other visiting artists.

Community Outreach

Committed to keeping quality theatre accessible, the MWT provides reduced ticket prices for seniors and students and donates free tickets to local nonprofits. Longstanding community partnerships include Santa Monica Meals on Wheels, the Santa Monica Oceanaires barbershop chorus, the Salvation Army's Silvercrest Senior Residence, neighbor Venice Family Clinic, Vettix, and Santa Monica Public Library. We belong to the Pico Improvement Organization, Santa Monica's Buy Local initiative, and the SM Chamber of Commerce. In 2019 the MWT was one of only three finalists in the Most Loved Santa Monica competition as one of the city's favorite cultural venues.

Auditions for our productions are open to all. Youth participating in Y.E.S. productions are selected by audition and are not charged fees or tuition. Likewise, teens and college students are trained in stagecraft, lighting, and sound without tuition and may select MWT for their community service hours. Both Mainstage and Y.E.S. shows feature post-performance discussions with actors, directors, and designers.

The Morgan-Wixson Theatre is a 200-seat non-Equity house, operated as a place where talent can train, theatrical passions can be sustained, and the community can be engaged in live theatre that entertains, enriches, and educates.

Contact Information

Box office	310.828.7519
MWT email	info@morgan-wixson.org
Press email	publicity@morgan-wixson.org
Website	www.morgan-wixson.org
Facebook	www.facebook.com/morganwixson
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