

The Star-Ledger Archive
COPYRIGHT © The Star-Ledger 2007

Date: 2007/05/03 Thursday Page: 001 Section: TOWNS Edition: MORRIS/EAST
Size: 591 words

Her play converts pain into laughter

One-woman show on stage in Parsippany

By JAMIE DUFFY
FOR THE STAR-LEDGER

Writer and actress Kristin Ace would like to thank all the mean girls at Pittsfield High School in Pittsfield, Mass., who beat her up and called her names.

Their behavior made possible the anguished writings of this former cheerleader who dated the class president and somehow wound up the whipping girl for so many. Ace said particular gratitude should go to the young man who raped her when she was 15.

Or maybe that honor should go to Ace's parents, who she said were incapable of stopping the brutality, as were, apparently, teachers and administrators.

All of them helped shape Ace's one-woman show "Baby, Oh Baby," a work in progress that is, believe it or not, funny, and one that she has performed in Morristown, New York City, North Adams, Mass. and Pennsylvania.

Starting tonight, Ace will once again take the stage at the Parsippany Playhouse for three consecutive dates. Her play was last performed in March 2006 at the Bickford Theater at the Morris Museum in Morris Township.

The work deals with women's overwhelming challenges, their struggle with raising children and the debate of motherhood versus a career. Ace's own story is the starting point, said Barbara Krajkowski, who is producing the show through her company, The Women's Theater of Parsippany.

"She offers hers so you can think about it," Krajkowski said.

Ace, now a 44-year-old Morristown resident, performed in high school theater and graduated from the University of Rhode Island with a theater degree.

She worked at an acting career in Chicago, Boston and New York until the birth of her son, Landon, in 1998. Then, everything changed.

"I had no intention of going back to acting – ever – until I started writing the play," said Ace. "When I held him I couldn't bear the thought of somebody taking care of him while I was out pursuing my career."

Yet her creative side wasn't satisfied with renovating her Victorian-era house in Morristown. And she was surprised at the feelings of isolation motherhood could bring on.

The play whirled around in her head for three years and then her daughter, Miranda, was born.

She finally sat down and started writing at the urging of her husband, Jeff Braemer, a financial adviser.

"He said to me, 'You've got to start writing these things down,'" she said.

The first time she performed her show at the Kellogg Club in Morristown five years ago, Ace said people were emotionally moved to tears and shouting.

Over the years, some of the heavier stuff has been jettisoned, not because it didn't belong there but because it was harder to pull the audience away from it when she moved on to her comical experiences as a young mother making the rounds of the play-date circle.

"Women never really talked about the things that plagued us," explains Ace. "There was little solidarity and many taboo topics. I wanted to break all that open."

"The play also deals with the many hilarious surprises children brought in my life in contrast with my brutal past and my struggle to not let that past rule my present."

The past is always there, Ace has found, even with years of talk therapy which has now evolved into meditation.

But she made it to her 25th high school reunion and "exorcised the last ghosts of my life." Now there's another good story.

"Baby, Oh Baby" runs Friday and Sat., May 4 and 5 at 8 p.m., and Sunday, May 6 at 3 p.m. For reservations, call (973) 316-3033.

NOTES: This article also appears in the MORRIS/SOUTH edition on page 1.