

# The Havre Weekly Chronicle

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## MAT members go from local to big city with production of The Harvest

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See an extended version of this story at [www.havre-dailynews.com](http://www.havre-dailynews.com).

People have an opportunity this week to preview in Havre a local play about to premiere in New York City.

Montana Actors' Theatre is producing MAT Executive Director Jay Pyette's play "The Harvest" before taking it to the big city.

Pyette discussed the history behind "The Harvest," as well as the groups upcoming trip.

"We are traveling to New York City the week after our showing here. We will perform in the Chain Theatre in Manhattan starting November 6 and running through the 22, for a total of 16 performances. It actually started pretty simply, I submitted The Harvest to Manhattan Repertory Theatre in New York as part of their call for new works. They get hundreds of scripts every year, and to my surprise, they selected ours. At first, the idea was

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## The Harvest

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for them to cast the show with New York actors, which is what they normally do," Pyette said.

"But as we kept talking, it became clear that this story, about a Montana farm family, rural life, and the people who live it, needed to be told by the folks who actually are from here. Our cast already knew the world of the play because it's their world. They'd lived parts of it," Pyette added. "So, instead of recasting it, Manhattan Rep asked if we'd be willing to bring our entire Montana team, the actors, the crew, everything, to perform it Off-Broadway at the Chain Theatre. ... It's not every day that a group of small-town Montana artists gets to take their own story to New York City."

"The Harvest tells the story of a Montana farm family coming to grips with a changing world. Six adult children face the reality of aging parents, the grim economics of a small family wheat farm, and the conflict of their own personalities and histories as they return home to help cut the crop."

"MAT first performed the show in March of 2022. After that, the Anaconda Ensemble Theatre produced it in May of 2024 and then Rooted Theatre Co. in Missoula produced it in August of 2024,"

Pyette said.

"They always say, 'Write what you know.' Much of the story comes from growing up in Chinook," Pyette said. "Parts of this family are based on mine, parts on the farms of friends and relatives that I spent a great deal of time on, and parts are simply based on all the people of this community, and all the communities across the Hi-Line."

"The story is really about family. The conflicts and loyalties. What do you do as your parents get older and the life you remembered as a kid suddenly isn't the reality anymore? What do you do when the people you grew up, your siblings, aren't the people you thought they were? There are so many questions in the play, but the answers to many of them are left up to the audience," Pyette said.

The play is centered on the Carthege family. The characters and their corresponding actors: Anna (the mother) - Pam Veis, James Jr. - TC Knutson, Alan - Grant Olson, Micky - Brian Gregoire, Sarah (Carthege) Pinnelly - Tylyn Turner, John - Chad Zuelke, Samuel - Aylan Pratt, and June Jacobs - Samantha Pollington.

The production will be performed in Havre at the MAT Theatre on October 22-25 starting

at 7:30 p.m. and October 25 and 26 with 3 p.m. matinees.

Tickets are available now at <http://www.mtactors.com> or at Bear Paw Meats or Pratt & Company.

"This has been such a moving and humbling experience. The sheer talent and passion of this cast is unbelievable. And they all believe in the story that we're telling. To watch them bring all of these characters to life is amazing. The thing is, all of them have experiences in their own lives similar to the characters they play. They are all rural Montana people and understand the challenges these characters face," Pyette said.

"Seeing the 'real' Montana up there on stage and knowing we get to take it to New York. Today, so many people who aren't from here have a very stereotypical view of the American west, based on things like Yellowstone. We aren't that. This is real. This is gritty. And so many people from around here will recognize every one of the characters as someone from their own lives."

The show is adults only and features original music composed for it by Matt Springer.

"We built a replica of the Chain Theatre on our stage, the walls of

the stage, the dressing rooms, everything to their exact specs, and then built our set in that. This cast will walk into a space in New York that is very familiar and there should be no surprises when we arrive and start to put the set-in place."

"For the New York trip, we arrive on November 1. We are all staying in Airbnb's in Jersey City. On November 3, we load into the Chain and set up. November 4 and 5 are rehearsal days and then we open on November 6 for a three-week run. We've been working with a public relations manager, Dan DeMello, and he has arranged for critics to review the show. One of those critics is from the Wall Street Journal, which is awesome."

"We can't quite express our gratitude to this community for making this possible. Even though we were accepted by Manhattan Rep, we still needed to get ourselves and our production there! To do so has been a monumental undertaking and a costly one, but this area, as always, has risen up and made it possible. The resilience and dedication that some of the characters in the show have is demonstrated every day by the people of this region, and we are eternally grateful for that."