

4-1985

Gynt: A Rock Musical Fantasy Program [1985]

University of Southern Maine Department of Theatre

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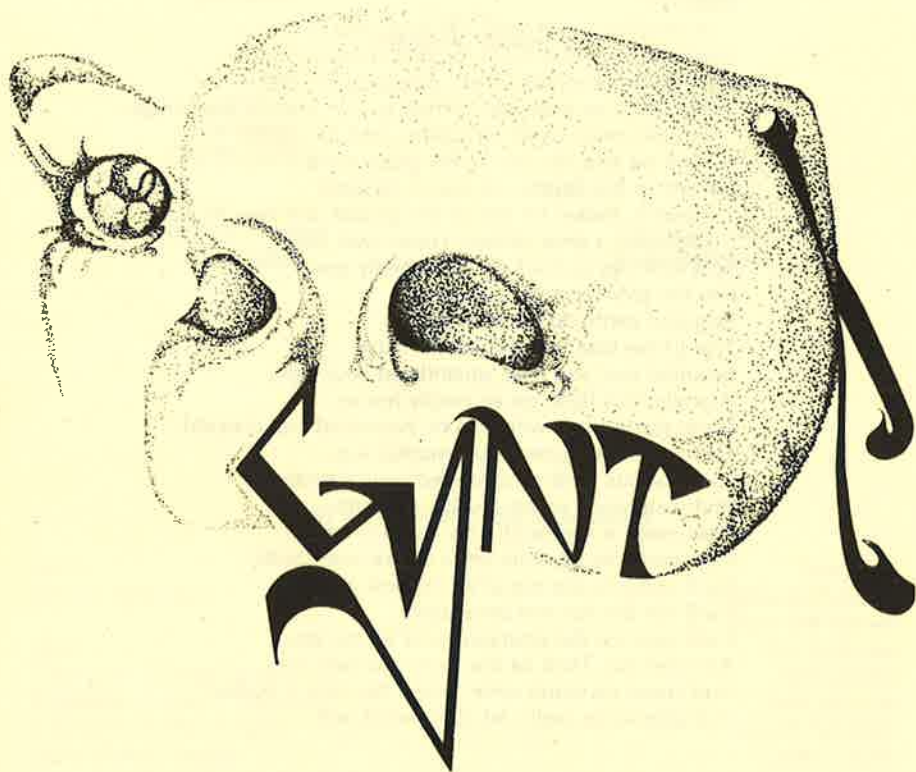
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**Russell Square Players
present**



A Rock Musical Fantasy

Book and Lyrics by Sam Rossi

Music by Flash Allen

Sponsored by Gorham Station

PEER

(A shooting star is seen. He nods after it)
Greetings from Peer Gynt, brother shooting star!
Shine forth, be extinguished, disappear for ever.
(He seems to draw into himself as if in fear; he goes deeper into the mists. Quiet for a time, then he shouts)
Is there no one, no one in this great world,
No one in the depths, no one in Heaven?
(Returns, throws his hat on the ground and tears his hair. Gradually, a great stillness comes over him)
So a soul can go back, so wretchedly poor,
Into the grey mists of nothingness.
Beautiful earth, do not be angry
That I have trod you and left no mark.
Beautiful sun, you have squandered your light,
Your glorious light, on an empty house.
There was no one within to be heartened and cheered;
The owner had gone. You beautiful sun,
You beautiful earth who wasted your warmth
And sustenance on my mother's womb!
How mean is the spirit, how lavish is nature!
How costly to pay with one's life for one's birth!
I will climb to the top of the highest peak,
I will see the sun rise once again,
I will gaze on the promised land till my eyes
Are tired out. Then let the snow pile over me,
And above my tomb write, "Here No One is buried."
And afterwards, well—let come what will.

*From Henrik Ibsen's **Peer Gynt**
(translation by Norman Ginsbury)*

Russell Square Players
present

the world premiere of
GYNT

A Rock Musical Fantasy

Book/Lyrics
Sam Rossi

Music
Flash Allen

Director
Walter R. Stump

Scenic and
Lighting
Designer
Charles Kading

Costume Designer
Su Brown

Musical Director
Flash Allen

Choreographer
Sheila Bellefleur

CAST (in order of initial appearance)

Fancy
Fancy's Attendants

Tina Allen
Stephanie Purinton
Laura Lee Sawyer
Don Jellerson
Kim Gowen
Brett Johnson
Jane B. Sylvester
Cathy Counts

Peter
Character 1 (Peter's Intellect)
Character 2 (Peter's Physical)
Character 3 (Peter's Spirit)
Tessa, Peter's mother
Gus, the cat; Jason; another troll;
Young Peter; Sir Twelve
Eli; Courtier Troll;
Ugly Child; Sir Nine
Jasper, Laura's father; the Troll King;
Sir Six
Elena, Sarah's mother; Petunia, a trollette;
Lady Five
Marrienne, Sam's mother; Gwen, a trollette;
Lady Two; Queen of Soria Moria
Carrie; Olive, a trollette; Lady One
Sam; Joshua
Sarah
Amanda; Daphney, a trollette; Lady Eight
Laura; Laurel, a trollette and later an old hag;
the Empress; the Princess of Soria Moria

Scott Powers
William Temple
Matthew Power
Stephanie E. Gould
Laurel Jellerson
Annie Jordan
Harold S. Withee
Jillaine Mortensen
Renee Lourey
Jaye Churchill

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES AND MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT ONE

PRELUDE - a ritual arena in the middle of a forest, pre-dawn

SCENE ONE - outside the Gynt home, early morning

Morning, The Stallion, Spend Your Time/Til I Do Something Great

SCENE TWO - an open field outside the village, later that day

Emperor in the Sky

SCENE THREE - the village, the early evening of that same day

Country Dancing/Waiting, The Devil in a Nut, The Abduction

SCENE FOUR - the forest, that same night and into the following month

And The Days Go By, In Night, The Wind

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE - the forest, in a dream

The Trollette Song

SCENE TWO - the Troll Castle, a short time later

The Troll Anthem

SCENE THREE - the forest, in another dream

Voice of the Ark

SCENE FOUR - another part of the forest, some months later and into the next few months

Fly Over My Lies, In Night, Go Round About

SCENE FIVE - Carrie's home, the following day

Soria Moria Castle, Go Round About, The Wind

ACT THREE

PRELUDE - somewhere far from home, twenty years later

The Wind/And The Days Go By

SCENE ONE - Gynt Castle, in a dream

Emperor in the Sky, Make the Darkness Wise, In Night, Waiting, Go Round About, Morning

SCENE TWO - an open field outside the village, sometime later

SCENE THREE - the forest, a short time later

Still You Are Mine, It is I/The Wind

SCENE FOUR - the ritual arena, a short time later

Still You Are Mine, Finale

MUSICIANS

"Hot Cynnops"

Flash Allen

Bill Irish

Ponch

Anton Sturchio

Vicky Foley

Keyboards

Bass Guitar and Keyboards

Drums and Percussion

Lead Guitar

Keyboards and Percussion

PRODUCTION STAFF

Assistant Director

Assistant Musical Director

Stage Manager

Assistant Stage Manager

Master Carpenter

Lighting Crew Chief

Lighting Board Operator

Lighting Assistant

Special Effects Designer

Sam Rossi

Vicky Foley

Karen Stevenson

Kirsten Schutz

Steve Price

Richard Sebastian

Fred Bernier

Tara Lee Hofbauer

Lisa Bess

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SAM ROSSI (Book/Lyrics)

Sam began his involvement with theatre during his school years in his hometown of Rumford, Maine. In 1972 he entered USM as a theatre major. As a student, Sam co-authored with Minor Rootes the anthological production, *Two Fifes and A Drum* in honor of the United States Bicentennial. This critically acclaimed production toured throughout Maine in 1975 and 1976, and was selected as a finalist for the New England Region of the American College Theatre Festival. Sam again received recognition from the American College Theatre Festival when he was named an Irene Ryan Award nominee for his lead role in Walter Stump's production of Kaiser's *From Morn til Midnight*. Sam was also one of the founding members of Maine's "Peanut Butter Readers," an original concept of children's theatre.

For the past several years Sam has supported himself in various theatrical administrative positions at such prestigious organizations as Princeton's McCarter Center for the Performing Arts and New York City's Big Apple Circus and Theater in the Park. While in NYC Sam created and directed "Readers of the Lost Art," a children's theatre group much like "Peanut Butter Readers," which has recently become an Equity company.

Last summer Sam returned to USM as managing director for Russell Square Summer Theatre's production of *The Most Happy Fella*. Along with a number of current writing and performing projects, Sam will be returning to Russell Square Summer Theatre as managing director again this year.

FLASH ALLEN (Music)

Born and raised in Jay, Maine, where he is a current member of the North Jay Grange and the Jay Baptist Church, Flash began studying piano at the age of eight. In 1965, a time of tremendous growth and diversity in modern music, Flash began playing in rock and dance bands at the age of 14. He entered USM in 1969 as a music major and began his musical relationship with theatre by composing incidental music for Walter Stump's award-winning production of Brecht's *Good Woman of Szechuan*. He then did arrangements and composed original music for two University anthology productions: the student-conceived *Unknown Citizen* and Minor Rootes' and Sam Rossi's *Two Fifes and a Drum*. Also while at USM, Flash wrote the complete musical score and some of the lyrics for Walter Stump's production of Kaiser's *From Morn til Midnight*, composed electronic tapes for student dance recitals, and musically directed *Celebration*.

As a graduate student at the University of New Hampshire, Flash composed the original score for John Edward's critically acclaimed production of *King Oedipus* and adapted Mozart's music for electronic instruments for their production of *Candide*.

Flash and his wife Tina have performed in professional rock bands throughout their adult years. With their current band, Shadowplay, Flash performs on keyboards, vocals, and synthesizer bass. He also plays flute. Flash and Tina have three rapidly growing boys.

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DIRECTOR'S NOTES

When Sam Rossi first mentioned to me several years ago that he was interested in doing a musical version, of *Peer Gynt*, my first reaction was not altogether positive. Upon reflection, though, I felt that Sam had the expertise to translate this charming Norwegian theatre piece into viable theatre. Sam has an excellent sensitivity to the beauty of language and a superb ability to capture the essence of poetic literature. He had proven that to me, and to the country, for that matter, by placing in the top twenty in poetry interpretation against over 1,000 contestants from all over the United States at the National Forensics Championships.

The *Gynt* legend has stimulated such important artists as Henrik Ibsen and Edvard Grieg, whose famous *Peer Gynt Suite* is familiar to most Americans. Sam's basic idea was not nearly as grandiose as Grieg's, nor as long-winded as Ibsen's. Rossi wanted to capture the essence of the piece and tell it in a contemporary musical form. The idea is not unlike the technique used by Andrew Lloyd Webber in his hit musical *Cats*, which is based on the poems of T. S. Eliot. The retelling of a classical tale is not without precedent either, when one considers there are over 98 dramatic versions of the *Amphitruon* legend.

Sam brooded on his idea while working at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, N.J., and later in New York, where he created a Reader's Theatre version of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, among other things. Two years ago, he called me from New York with the news that he had completed a draft based on the Norwegian poem, which he called *Gynt* and wondered if I would read it. The Russell Square Players are always interested in new works, particularly works done by former students. In a week, not only had I read the draft, but Rossi had made the trip to Maine explaining that he had contacted another former student, Flash Allen, to compose the music. In my opinion Flash Allen is one of the brightest young composers in New England, and I knew that Sam and Flash had worked together before. This combination, it seemed to me, was a particularly happy one. A short time later Flash walked into my office, score in hand, and proceeded to play a few numbers he had already composed for

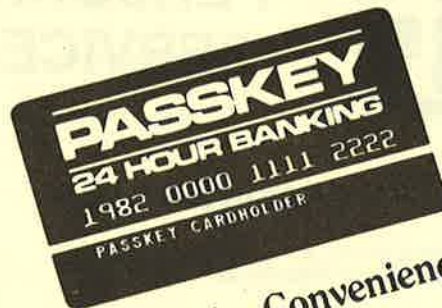
Gynt. I was convinced. While it was impossible to schedule a production for that year, the Theatre Department scheduled it for the '84/85 season.

The production you are seeing tonight is the result of numerous rewrites and countless hours of work by these two young artists. It is a work in progress, the most exciting kind of theatre. Whether *Gynt* goes on to bigger and greater things is a matter for the future to tell. It is certain, though, that the processes our students have been exposed to in bringing this work to actuality are priceless to their overall education. The Russell Square Players' production of *Gynt* features 19 performers playing more than 40 roles and performing over 30 musical numbers. Flash Allen's music, much like that of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats*, *Evita*, and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, is based in the rock and jazz influences of our time. The score brings to mind such commercial artists as Cindy Lauper, Stevie Wonder, and Hall and Oates; such nostalgic artists as the Temptations and the Doors; and such innovative artists as David Byrne (Talking Heads) and Rick Wakeman.

As director I am very proud to have been a part of the production. It has been a pleasant experience, as well as a rewarding one. My hope is that you as an audience will enjoy this new artistic vehicle as much as we have enjoyed its making.

Win, lose, or draw, the processes involved in the creation of a new piece are what educational theatre is all about.

Walter Stump
Director



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We wish to thank the USM Theatre Department's faculty, students, and friends for taking the chance, for their endless support, and for making our fantasies and Peter Gynt's come to life.

Sam Rossi and Flash Allen



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March	King Alfred's College (England) tour
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