

Montgomery siblings write winning musical

By Jennifer Kohlhepp
Staff Writer

MONTGOMERY — A new musical by a local brother and sister team has been accepted to the 2014 New York Musical Theatre Festival (NYMF).

Book and lyrics by Jessie Field, 23, and music by Jared Field, 25, "Always, Rachel" was selected to be a part of NYMF's developmental reading program and will be presented in the festival this July. NYMF veteran Julie Kramer will be directing the musical about the life of environmentalist and nature writer Rachel Carson.

"We were both really shocked," Jared said. "The application rate is so high for these festivals, and the acceptance rate so low. We applied to a few other festivals as well, and certainly felt that this was the greatest thing we had ever created together, but it still took us a while to get over how surreal it felt to actually have this incredible opportunity."

Jared and Jessie grew up in Belle Mead, and they both graduated from Montgomery High School (Jared '07, Jessie '09). Subsequently, they both attended and graduated from Brandeis University (Jared



Courtesy photo

Jared Field and Jessie Field of Belle Mead wrote a musical that will be presented in the 2014 New York Musical Theatre Festival.

'11, Jessie '13) where Jared majored in music and Jessie in theater arts. Their first collaboration was a one-act musical entitled, "Harold! The Musical," which received a grant and a place in the 2009 Leonard Bernstein Festival of the Arts.

"Always, Rachel" is their first full-length collaboration together. It was presented as a workshop production at the 2013 Brandeis Senior Thesis Festival (as Jessie's senior thesis) and was a winner of the Harold and Mimi Stein-

berg prize for Best Original Play.

"It's really a nontraditional musical as musicals go," Jared said. "It's not campy and there are no huge dance breaks or anything. We really tried to connect the music to the story and use it to tell the story as well, so the music is very specific and intricate and winds through the story as the themes do. The story itself follows Rachel Carson through her life, but focuses in first on her struggle to write 'Silent Spring' and secondly on her close relationship with

Dorothy Freeman. It's a tribute to Carson for sure, but also just an honest exploration of her life and accomplishments. So much of what she fought for is still so relevant today — we continue to strive for true equality and a protected environment. We just hope to remind viewers that every one of us can make a difference. Rachel is really a role model."

When asked what it is like working with his sister, Jared said, "I really enjoy working with Jessie. We are quite close, and so it is very easy to communicate honestly. But we also come from different artistic backgrounds and so we each offer a different perspective on our work, and help each other make our own contributions stronger. Even though I'm listed as the composer and Jessie is listed as the book writer and lyricist, there are passages throughout the show written by me, as well as musical themes written by Jessie. It has really been an incredible experience in collaboration."

Jessie said working with Jared is great.

"We largely write separately, which is convenient because of our distance, but we always come back together afterwards and have a really great rapport with each other. We know each other so well it's easy to be completely candid about our feelings without worrying about offending each other. And we have a lot of fun teasing each other when one of writes something stupid."

Jared is a composer, conductor, and clarinetist, currently completing his master's in music education at Teacher's College at Columbia University. His music has been performed throughout the northeast by professional ensembles and students alike. He currently teaches composition lessons at Teacher's College.

Jessie is currently a Boston-area director and playwright. She is a founder of the Crossroad Players — a new Boston theater company, that encourages young artists to tackle innovative productions

— and currently serves as its artistic director and president.

When asked about their goals, Jared said, "Our immediate goals are to revise our script and make it the best show it can be. We are working with a dramaturg, Lynn Spector, who has been assigned to us by the New York Musical Theatre Festival. She and our director, Julie Kramer, have already been incredibly helpful and given us a lot of amazing ideas. We hope that this reading will allow us to present the core of our show in the strongest way possible, and will help lead our show to opportunities for full productions in the future."

"Always, Rachel" will be presented on July 7 at 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. and on July 12 at 4 p.m. It will be performed at The Studio — Theatre Row on 42nd Street. Tickets are free, but limited. Visit NYMF.org for more information about the festival or www.alwaysrachel.com for more information about the show.



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