



## arts

### "INTO THE WOODS"

It sounds like a joke: "A baker, a chunky girl, a boy farmer, two princes, two step-sisters and a witch go walking in the forest..." And yet, this is the recipe for one of the greatest musical stage productions of all time. The first "adult"

musical I ever saw was a video-taped New York version of "Into the Woods," which debuted on PBS in the late 1980s. The soundtrack became a mainstay in my family's tape deck, especially for long road trips. Today, I can hum nearly every song, to my friends' chagrin. With music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim and a poignant book by James Lapine, "Into the Woods" contains all the wit and wisdom of "Grimm's Fairy Tales"—and that's just Act I.

Questioning the very idea of "happily ever after," "Into the Woods" is a beautiful tragedy set against the backdrop of favorite folk tales. Comtra Theatre presents this sprawling Broadway classic Aug. 28-Sept. 5. (Route 19, Cranberry Township. Tickets: \$15. Info: 724/773-9896, [comtratheatre.com](http://comtratheatre.com))

—Robert Isenberg, PM Theater Editor

## arts

### PITTSBURGH SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARKS

The city's only free outdoor Shakespeare company, Pittsburgh Shakespeare in the Parks, will present the comedy "Love's Labour's Lost" in Frick, Mellon and Kennard Parks over four weekends this month.

First published in 1598, and then called "a pleasant, conceited comedy," the story follows the young king of Navarre and his best friends, who swear off love for three years only to break their oaths by wooing the princess of France and her ladies with hilarious hi-jinks and coquetry gone awry.

Melissa Hill Grande, of Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre and Phase 3 Productions, debuts with Pittsburgh Shakespeare as director. "Grande brings her extensive directing experience and infectious energy, and approaches the play with a fresh spin," says Jennifer Tober, PSIP artistic director. "Think Mount Lebanon girls invade Upper St. Clair boys to get the Galleria back," adds Grande.

"Bring a blanket, a thermos and a loved one," says Tober...and expect to be a part of the action and move about the parks, as the actors rove to different settings appropriate to each scene. Audience members may want to bring along an umbrella, too, as the show is cancelled only in heavy rain or dangerous conditions. "We've performed in a drizzle...and in the mud," Tober adds.

"Love's Labour's Lost" opens in Frick Park (near the Blue Slide Playground) in Point Breeze on Sept. 5 and 6, moves to Mellon Park in Shadyside on Sept. 12 and 13, on to Kennard Park in the Hill District on Sept. 19 and 20 and then returns to Frick Park on Sept. 26 and 27. All shows begin at 2 p.m. Admission is free to all ages. Donations are encouraged.

## food find CRAZY GOOD COFFEE

Asylum Coffee Bar opens its doors this week at 1919 Forbes Ave. in uptown, and although it offers a long list of sweet, buzz-worthy lattes and mochas and markets itself as a safe haven for residents of its gritty neighborhood, this is not your typical, cozy, corner coffee shop. Co-founders Matt Hoover and C.W. Fetrow went for clean lines and added industrial architectural elements such as poured concrete floors, a metal bar and a garage-door front.

The shop offers a long menu of mochas and lattes in flavors such as vanilla raspberry, peanut-butter banana and dark-chocolate mint, all made with espresso beans from Iron Star Roasting and available hot, iced or blended. A bonus for the busy downtown commuter: curbside service. Pull into a parking spot out front, place your order with one of the curbside attendants, and your drink will be brought straight to your car. Info: 412/281-5369, [asylumcoffeebar.com](http://asylumcoffeebar.com). —Liz Fetchin, PM Associate Editor

## sports

### FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS

Long before it was a book, a movie and a TV series, "Friday Night Lights" was simply a small slice of Americana. It was high school football, and it was special and fun, but it was intensely local and a big deal only to those who really cared.

Now, high school football is telecast live on FSN Pittsburgh, is the subject of a weekly feature on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" and is the heavily advertised heart of every local TV station's 11 o'clock news show. But you can forgive yourself for thinking that in the process of it getting bigger than ever, it's somehow gotten smaller.

The real game is still out there, complete with cheerleaders, marching bands and mascots. You just have to know where to look. Some will look at a game like this weekend's match-up between Gateway and Penn Hills at 7:30 Friday night and assume that's what it's all about—big games involving big schools with national rankings in "USA Today" at stake. I beg to differ.

What makes high school football in Western Pennsylvania important isn't the quality of play, the importance of the result or the size of the crowd. All that really matters is that the people who are involved as participants and fans feel a real connection to the enterprise and consider it worthwhile repeating week after week, year after year. It's important because, deep down, it doesn't really matter—and yet those connected to it will behave as if it does. And they should. That's what makes it special. That's what makes it worth coming back to. —Bill MODOONO, PM Sportswriter

## wine&dine

### LUNCH ON THE RIVER

Just when we needed a little place to dry off and have lunch, White Water Adventurers Coffee Shop appeared on the horizon. After a day of climbing rocks and paddling around in our favorite swimming hole on the Youghiogheny River near Ohio Pyle, we were caught in a furious downpour. And starving. We wanted something quick to eat before making the trip back home to the city.

What we didn't expect from the informal kitchen was turkey carved from the breast and chicken salad made from chickens literally just out of the oven. While we waited for our food to arrive, our attention meandered to the holes in the authentic knotty-pine walls and to the hand-painted oils of local scenery, showing the roiling Youghiogheny River, its falls, beautiful skies and mountainous backgrounds.

It was raining hard by the time our sandwiches arrived. "Real' turkey," said my son, demolishing his sandwich. The chicken salad was equally fresh and mixed with grapes and walnuts on a fresh croissant. "Breakfast served all day," said the woman who took care of us, offering that she even packs box lunches (\$7) to take on the river.

The kids choose penny candy for the ride home—two bags for \$1. As we passed cows and barns and drooping corn, I couldn't expunge melancholy lyrics from Jim Morrison (of The Doors) out of my subconscious: "Summer's almost gone...almost gone." And I noticed the light and shadows changing as the day grew later, and also spotted a few yellow leaves floating from the trees.

Summer's definitely almost gone, but it's not too late for a road trip to the country, your favorite swimming hole and a quintessential, country eatery. Info: 800/992-7238. —Deborah McDonald, PM Restaurant Critic