



Director Anne Bogart based *Cabin Pressure* on relationship between audiences, actors.

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Humana Festival's 'Cabin' faces deadline pressure

By Rich Copley

HERALD-LEADER ARTS WRITER

LOUISVILLE — Kae Koger says the premise of *Cabin Pressure* is simple.

"It's about the relationship between the audience and the actors, and it's essentially an exploration of that relationship, which is so hard to define," said Koger, dramaturge (literary adviser) for the play that opens this week at the Humana Festival of New American Plays.

"When you go to a play, what is it you feel, what is the experience, what is it that it does to you? That is the question that the play tries to address.

"That's the easy part. How they're making it happen is the complicated part."

Conceived by celebrated director Anne Bogart, *Cabin Pressure* started when she directed *Private Lives* last year at Actors Theatre of Louisville, which presents the Humana Festival.

A "project audience" was formed, consisting of 40 people whose interest in theater ranged from negligible to ravenous. Members attended rehearsals of *Private Lives*, saw the show and participated in "talk-back" sessions afterward. Bogart interviewed each member of the project audience after the show,

and they all agreed to go to other plays and events.

Journals they kept and responses in interviews and discussion groups were compiled in large binders that formed part of the text for *Cabin Pressure*. The other part was theater scholarship over the centuries, dating back to ancient Greece.

Last summer, Bogart and actors in her Saratoga International Theatre Institute began poring through the piles of notebooks and binders to piece together what would be used in *Cabin Pressure*.

Actors Theatre literary assis-

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If you go

Cabin Pressure, part of the Humana Festival of New American Plays, runs Thursday through March 28 at Actors Theatre of Louisville, 316 W. Main St. Showtimes this week are 7:30 Thursday (preview) and Saturday (a Friday show and Saturday matinee are sold out). For future showtimes and tickets (\$16-\$28) call (800) 428-5849.

PLAY: It looks at relationship of actors, audience

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tant Adrien-Alice Hansel said the group originally was leaning toward the more scholarly side of the research, but shifted gears to focus on the project audience.

"It's a huge validation of the audience: people who sometimes get it and sometimes don't but who are willing to give two hours of their lives to the theater," Hansel said.

As of last week, the show was still so much in development that Bogart declined interview requests and did not allow visitors into rehearsals.

Koger and Hansel say the show has a list of 17 questions it tries to answer by using the thoughts of people in the project audience, the writings of scholars, and showing how things happen. There will be a scene from a murder mystery in which the only dialogue is stage directions, a scene showing what it's like right before an actor goes on stage, and thoughts from audience members on what theater means to them.

"It was moving to read how theater really impacts some of these people's lives," talking them to different places, introducing them to interesting people and providing an escape from the real world, Koger said.

So, will all this talk of how theater affects audiences, how audiences affect theater and how theater happens be of any interest to people who aren't die-hard theater fans?

"That's something they've been really careful about," Hansel said of Bogart's company. "They've made sure that it's articulating the experience and not a lot of theater talk. And it's really a comedy — it's very, very funny."