

## On call curtain call

By Diamond Henry



May 10

Supporters of MSU's Department of Theatre can get a sneak peek at one of its newest projects Wednesday evening. The department will unveil the Musical Theatre Touring Company at its "A Bite of Broadway" fundraising gala.

Under the direction of MSU theater faculty Brad Willcuts, Alisa Hauser and Dave Wendelberger, the Musical Theatre Touring Company comprises a select group of musical theater students who will present Broadway-style performances on campus and in the community.

"We developed the Musical Theatre Touring Company as a way to give more experiential learning options for students interested in musical theatre and for students who enroll the musical theater program," Willcuts said.

The group is the brainchild of Department of Theatre Chairman Kirk Domer and Wharton Center Executive Director Mike Brand as another outlet to showcase the department. The group's members, who Willcuts describes as elite musical theater students, auditioned to secure their spots. The goal is to have a company that can create high-quality shows in a short time.

“Anyone who that needs entertainment at the drop of a hat can hire us, and we can organize our show to fit the venue,” Willcuts said. “We have a pretty large repertoire; we can put things together pretty quickly.”

In addition to entertainment from the Musical Theatre Touring Company, Wednesday’s Broadwaythemed event offers a “strolling dinner” of heavy hors d’oeuvres and wine. The event benefits MSU’s Friends of Theatre Endowment, which offers funding for special projects and scholarships.

For its grand debut, the Musical Theatre Touring Company will be joined Wednesday by Courtney Holbrook, who has appeared in Broadway productions of “Kinky Boots” and “Les Misérables.” She has also visited East Lansing in the touring productions of “The Addams Family” and “Legally Blonde.”

“It’s fun to be up on stage.

and it’s fun to tell a story, but it’s also fun when you feel like you’ve reached into the audience and touched the lives of people watching you,” Holbrook said. “I think it’s a huge part of why actors get into this business in the first place.”

She has also worked with aspiring actors through the Wharton Center’s Take it From the Top summer musical theater camp. Holbrook said that Broadway experiences were rare where he grew up, so she is thrilled to help young performers learn more about musical theater.

“Anything you can do to help form and inform the minds and talents of young kids is really valuable,” she said. “What they do for the kids — and what the donors and all of the friends do to help the program — is amazing. I’m happy to be back and giving back to the community.”

While summer is a slow season for many students and faculty, the MSU Department of Theatre is gearing up for another installment of its Summer Circle Theatre, laying the groundwork for its 2017-2018 season and preparing the Musical Theatre Touring Company to take its show on the road.

“We’re excited about the coming year,” Willcuts said. “As we start locking down more material, we’re ready to travel and ready to go.”

“A Bite of Broadway”

6-8:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 10 \$100 Wharton Center 750 E. Shaw Lane, East Lansing (517) 355-6690, [theatre.msu.edu](http://theatre.msu.edu)