

Theatre of Terror comes to Gothenburg

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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Playhouse promises plenty of scares, thrills.

Imagine dark walkways with a host of things that go bump in the night.

Throw in specially designed Halloween costumes from New York City, add a new surround-sound system and spotlights in a creaky old theatre and you have what organizers call “the most elaborate and best haunted house between Omaha and Denver.” “It sure ain’t no kiddie pumpkin patch” is how playhouse past president Matt Weiss describes Gothenburg Community Playhouse’s upcoming production.

Weiss helps direct and produce the Theater of Terror which opens to the public Oct. 28 and 30-31 in the Sun Theatre.

“We have all the advantages of a playhouse that a normal haunted house doesn’t have,” Matt said, pointing to the massive stage, spotlights and sound system.

When compared to a regular production, Lorri Weiss said most are on stage.

“But we get a whole theatre to fill with a lobby, an audience area, a stage and a basement,” Lorri explained.

A haunted theatre also has disadvantages.

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Time.

Matt said most of the bigger haunted houses have all year to design and construct sets and props for the next year's production.



Because movies are shown at the Sun on weekends, Matt said they have only 2 weeks to assemble the 83-year-old theatre into a house of terror.

Matt started planning for this year's playhouse production about six months ago.

Three months ago, he and others started building props.

Storage has been a problem, Matt said, as has the construction of large set pieces such as a massive mausoleum they are building on stage.

"We couldn't build the mausoleum until the theatre closed on Oct. 11," Matt said.

Since then, they've been at it every night.

"We want to make the haunted house structurally sound but we also need to tear it down and store it when we're done," he explained, noting that organizers hope to make the haunted house a yearly event.

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Matt and Lorri said they didn't have trouble attracting 35 set builders, actors and actresses and technical crew to work on the production.

Lorri said the majority are adults.

"We've got the whole community involved. They said they love a good old-fashioned haunted house," she said.

Mary Streeter said becoming involved with the production was a good way for her and husband Blake Streeter to become community participants.

"We moved back to Gothenburg and wanted to become involved in the community and this is the perfect way to start," Streeter said.

She said she thinks the haunted house will be well received because it's something new.

"It will be good for people to come to it with an open mind because there is a huge element of surprise," Streeter explained. "I think people will be surprised.

"This is real scary."

Part of the surprise, she noted, is the production's three-dimensional effect.

"We're trying to grab all of the senses—visual, auditory and even a sense of touch," Streeter said. "Even though you're not supposed to touch the actors, you will be able to feel it's scary."

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What is it that makes the theatre of terror so popular? It has become part of the tradition to celebrate Halloween in many different ways, from pumpkins and costumes to