

# The Seven Devils Shuffle

Play will switch scenes between showings

BY DREW DODSON  
The Star-News

If viewers of both showings of Max Reuben's play at the Seven Devils Playwright Conference in McCall think something has changed between performances, they would be right.

Reuben's play, "Then, Of Course, All the Things Happened," will be read publicly on Wednesday at the Alpine Playhouse and on Saturday, June 22, at McCall-Donnelly High School. But each performance will look much different.

Like a dealer shuffling a deck of cards, the scenes and their sequence in the play are randomly generated before each performance, creating endless possibilities.

"I've already thrown away half a deck and I've probably written a couple decks," said Reuben, a Brooklyn, New York, playwright.

Reuben is one of seven playwrights featured in this year's Seven Devils Playwrights Conference, a playwright development workshop now in its 19th year in McCall. All events are free and open to the public.

"Then, Of Course, All the Things Happened," started out as a traditional script, but evolved into a sprawling smorgasbord of scenes after Reuben continuously wrote new first scenes with different and unrelated characters.

## Personal Connection

The method allows the audience to draw their own personal connections to the scenes rather than the playwright drawing those connections for them, Reuben said.

"It's kind of inviting the audience to day dream as they're watching it," he said. "I want people to start writing their own play about their own life as they're watching this play."

Contrary to writing scenes that are general and easy to relate to, Reuben instead crafts hyper-specific scenes that aim to relate the emotion to the audience rather than the experience.

One scene includes grieving pet owners burying a cat,

the next could be a troubled child trying to tell his parents he did wrong and the next could include an awkward exchange between friends.

"Those are all part of our story," Reuben said. "It's all sort of chaos."

The goal is to take the "weird" and "mundane" events of daily life that may cause shame or despair and show people that it is normal, yet unique to each individual.

"They're not as alone in having those feelings or those experiences that they may be thought," he said. "We all kind of share a communal experience of being alive."

Reuben believes the theater is an ideal place to "reduce existential despair" in the world because of the tight-knit, yet fleeting nature of actor to audience relationships in theater productions.

"There's something special about being in a dark room with a bunch of strangers and there's a bunch of strangers on stage asking you to feel emotion," he said.

## New Appreciation

If successful, the audience will walk away with a new appreciation for the little moments in life that stack up to mean much more and, perhaps, a new understanding of their own lives, Reuben said.

"We don't always realize the things that are happening to us as we're living them, all the unique and special experiences that we have," he said. "So, it is nice to point and say 'wow, I'm alive.'"

Writing the play has opened Reuben's eyes to these moments, allowing him to turn "auto-pilot" off and start "clocking them" as they happen to him.

Since being in McCall, he has already experienced several such moments, including a peaceful bliss that washed over him while overlooking Payette Lake and the welcoming embrace McCall has given him as a Seven Devils playwright.

Reuben hopes to iron out the logistics of producing a truly random play for each showing during his time in McCall.

He still is unsure of how



Photo by Drew Dodson/The Star-News

Playwright Max Reuben, left, of Brooklyn, New York, teams up with A.P. Andrews, literary manager and dramaturg for the Seven Devils Playwrights Conference, to determine how shuffling the scenes in Reuben's play will manifest on stage.

many actors he needs, whether they will need to memorize every possible scene or if they will be chosen for roles in a lottery system.

For a complete listing of events during the conference, visit <https://www.idtheater.org/2019-schedule.html>.

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS 2019 SEVEN DEVILS PLAYWRIGHTS CONFERENCE

All events are free and start at 7:30 p.m. at the Alpine Playhouse, 1210 Roosevelt Ave. in McCall, unless otherwise noted. See [www.idtheater.org](http://www.idtheater.org) for details.

• Thursday, June 13: Plays by students from McCall-Donnelly High School.

An evening of new work written by the drama students of McCall-Donnelly High School and mentored by members of Seven Devils professional company of theater artists.

• Friday, June 14: "A Little Ghost Story," by Jennifer Rumberger.

Lettie doesn't believe in ghosts, but when her father Jake reports that strange things are happening in the middle of the night she drops everything and heads home, to the house she grew up in, the house her dad is renovating, the house where - 10 months ago - her sister Mara died of an opioid overdose.

Convinced her father is in denial,



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sionate about Homer's "The Odyssey," and are both African-Americans in the very white Classics department at their very white university.

When they stumble upon the discovery that Homer himself came from Africa, Mac and Nessa find themselves at odds with centuries of assumptions, the institutions determined to enforce them, their families, the internet, and even Homer himself.

• Monday, June 17: "Insta-Play!" Playwriting starts at 6 p.m., performances at 7:30 p.m.

Those attending will be guided through the process of writing, rehearsing and mounting a play for the friendliest audience ever.

Budding playwrights should arrive at 6 p.m. to write a play or audience members should arrive at 7:30 p.m. to enjoy an evening of fresh, new theater. • Wednesday, June 19: "Then, Of Course, All The Things Happened," by Max Reuben.

What if you took all the things that happened: that time you bought a car, or buried a stray cat, or the time you waited for a ride in the rain, and turned them round and round like a kaleidoscope, tethering unremarkable moments and half-memories into whole new narratives?

This is the world of "Then, Of Course, All The Things Happened." One play, countless variations.

• Thursday, June 20: "Two Minutes After Dawn," by Vinecia Coleman.

• Friday, June 21: "¡O Cascadia!" by Ramón Esquivel

• Saturday, June 22, 2 p.m., McCall-Donnelly High School: "Then, Of Course, All The Things Happened," by Max Reuben.

• Saturday, June 22: "The Robertassey," by Kathleen Cahill.

# Seven Devils

## PLAYWRIGHTS CONFERENCE

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