

**Director Stephen Cole kept coming back to 'Time After Time'**

**By Alice T. Carter, PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW**

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**Photos**

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'Time After Time'

Drew Yenchak

'Time After Time'

Performed by: Point Park University's Conservatory Theatre Company

When: Thursday through Sunday and March 11-14, with shows at 8 p.m.  
Thursdays and Fridays, 2 and 8 p.m. Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays

Admission: \$18-\$20

Where: The Pittsburgh Playhouse, 222 Craft Ave., Oakland

Details: 412-621-4445 or Web site

About the writer

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For humans, the journey from conception to birth takes a little under nine months. For Asian elephants, it's 21 months.

A new musical can take much longer.

For Stephen Cole, the writer and lyricist of "Time After Time," it's five years and counting.

"That's why it's called 'development,' " Cole says.

"Time After Time" moves one step closer to completion Thursday at the Pittsburgh Playhouse in Oakland with a preview performance of its first fully staged production by Point Park University's Conservatory Theatre Company, the university's student company.

Pittsburgh-area audience members may best remember Cole as the writer and lyricist for the musical "Casper," which had its world premiere as part of the 2001 Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera season.

He estimates he has worked on eight other musicals since "Casper."

But "Time After Time" is the one he keeps coming back to.

"It's mostly because I can't stay away," he says. "For me, it's the characters and the story and finding out the heart of what it's about."

The roots of "Time After Time" are in Karl Alexander's 1979 sci-fi novel of love, murder and time travel and the 1979 movie of the same name.

The play begins in London in 1893 with Victorian writer, inventor and time traveller H.G. Wells discovering that friend John Leslie Stephenson is also serial killer Jack the Ripper. When Stephenson escapes in Wells' time machine, Wells follows him through time and space to 20th century New York City, which Wells believes will be a utopia.

"It's a good, old-fashioned, contemporary, romantic, sci-fi thriller," says Gabriel Barre, who compares the journey through place and time to a 3-D chess game.

Barre, who is directing and choreographing the production, joined the creative team last year. "Stephen and (composer) Jeffrey (Saver) weave irony into the story. H.G. comes to the present to look for a great solution ... and finds man has succumbed even more to man's base natures. I love the irony. One of the other messages is, 'You never know what you're going to find. Despite what you are looking for, be alert for treasures.' "

Saver, who is a teaching artist in residence at Point Park had previously collaborated with Cole on the musical "Continental Divide" (formerly known as "Dodsworth") and has enjoyed the development process on "Time After Time."

"It's fun to write because nothing is black and white about (Wells and Stevenson). Both gentlemen learn from each other and these are things Stephen and I find interesting and fun to write," Saver says. "When H.G. finds the Ripper, he raises his hand to hit him. Who's the villain? Who's violent?"

It was Saver who suggested a developmental production of "Time After Time" to Ronald Allan-Lindbloom, the artistic director of the Pittsburgh Playhouse and the dean of the Conservatory of Performing Arts.

"Ron dove in on it, read it and committed," Saver says. "The students will walk away with something they can't experience elsewhere -- working on a new piece."

"Time After Time" had a private reading in New York City last August and a seated reading at Carnegie Mellon University's School of Drama in 2002.

But the production that begins performances tonight will be the first chance to see it on stage with costumes, sets, an orchestra and possibly most important -- an audience.

"It's the first real physical production -- a huge step. We're trying out more than the story. It's a physical approach to the show we are trying to do," Barre say. "There are so many reasons to be excited. ... I am confident the show will have a life."