

NEXT TO NORMAL

Side effects may include...dysfunction.

For Immediate Release | September 28, 2016



Next month, **The Studio Theatre™ Tierra del Sol** (806 San Marino Drive, The Villages, FL) will open its inaugural season with *Next to Normal*, the three time Tony Award-winning musical about a family coping with crisis.

Winner of the 2010 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, *Next To Normal* was chosen as "one of the year's 10 best shows" by critics around the country. With book and lyrics by Brian Yorkey and music by Tom Kitt, *Next To Normal* contains a thrilling contemporary score and is an emotional powerhouse of a musical that explores how one suburban household copes with crisis and mental illness. It was hailed by Rolling Stone Magazine as, "The most talked about show on Broadway - the acclaimed, groundbreaking musical that pushes Broadway in new directions." The show was described by The New York Times as, "Much more than a feel-good musical; it is a feel-everything musical."



Playing the lead role of Diana Goodman is **Whitney Morse**, who also doubles as The Studio Theatre's Artistic Director. Morse is no stranger to this part or this play—she also starred in *Next to Normal* at the Skokie Theatre in Chicago, Illinois last year. Reviewer Kelly Kleiman for *Dueling Critics* praised, "The performance (and especially the singing) of Whitney Morse as Diana, the mother whose illness threatens to wreck her family as well as her own life, suggests much bigger things in her future: she's rueful but free of self-pity, funny without resorting to stereotype, and all-around engaging." Angela Allyn for *Chicago Stage Standard* hailed, "Whitney Morse gives a tour de force performance as Diana." Whitney will portray the suburban wife and mother as she struggles to hold on to her life as she knows it with a bipolar disorder and balancing a devastating life-shattering tragedy.



Meanwhile Morse's real-life niece, **Emily Chelsea**, will take on the role of Diana's daughter, Natalie Goodman. Chelsea, new to the Florida theatre scene, hails from California and works throughout the LA and San Diego areas. She received her BFA in Musical Theater at California State University Fullerton. While she is a young, up and coming actress, audiences may recognize her recently from several plays at Candlelight Pavilion among other stages and theatre companies. Ashley Ludwig of Valley News celebrated her Spring Awakening performance, "Emily Chelsea (Wendla) set the high bar with her opening sequence, 'Mama Who Bore Me,' her voice soaring with soul and spirit on this no-punch-pulled performance of a journey into adulthood." Chelsea is trained in stage, dance, opera, aerial arts, and has vocals ready to share with Central Florida. Watching Morse and Chelsea on stage together for the first time should create another interesting layer to this unique presentation of *Next to Normal*, and one that local residents are anticipating greatly.

Brian Zealand will play the part of Diana's husband, Dan Goodman—a role he played at the end of last year (opposite Morse) at the Skokie Theatre. The cast also includes other theatre favorites: **Josh Kimball** as Henry, **Brett Ricci** as Dr. Madden, and **Tyler Beauregard** as Gabe. The Creative Team is composed of Director **Aradhana Tiwari**, Musical Director **Gary Powell**, Set Designer **Kenneth Constant**, Technical Director **Preston Speaker**, Lighting Designer **Dan Hopper**, Costume Designer **Virginia McKinney**, Master Electrician **Weston Cory**, Sound Designer **Eric Mielke**, Production Manager **Heather Ard**, and Stage Manager **Abigale Bobb**. Musicians: **Gary Powell** on piano, **Jerry Bruno** on drums, **Bill Neale** on guitar, **John Gaffney** on bass, and **Nicu Brouillette** on violin.

- **What:** Next To Normal, by Brian Yorkey and Tom Kitt
- **Where:** The Studio Theatre Tierra Del Sol, 806 San Marino Dr. The Villages, FL
- **When:** November 14 - December 17th
- **For tickets:** www.TheSharonStudio.com, (352) 751-7799
- **Price:** \$15 previews, \$30 performances

The Studio Theatre's Mission is to inspire the residents of Central Florida to examine relevant issues by elevating them through innovative and intimate storytelling. ***Think outside the box, inside the box.***

Media Contacts for The Studio Theatre are Erika Kathryn Nelson (Marketing Account Manager) Erika.Nelson@TheVillages.com and Heather Ard (Production Manager) Heather.Ard@TheVillages.com.