

A NOTE TO THE PRESS:

In 2010, I saw a 2003 documentary film, A MODEL FOR MATISSE. I instantly told myself, "This is a play," and proceeded to work on an adaptation for the stage, and to get in touch with the writer/director, Barbara F. Freed. Before I could reach her, I heard about a major film on its way based on the story, starring Al Pacino as Matisse. So I dropped it.

Last year, looking over old notes, I realized the movie had never been made, and was no longer on Pacino's slate. So this time, I followed up with Ms. Freed. She was cautious at first, but a phone call went well, and after a meeting at her home in Philadelphia, a deal was struck.

No longer was I pursuing a license for a play, but now had a collaborator - a collaborator who knew the story intimately, and who happened to be a very good writer. And thus, the following release for the upcoming production. (BELOW is a link to a short video intro to the grace and beauty of The Vence Chapel.)

MIDNIGHT TO PRESENT WORLD PREMIERE - "A MODEL FOR MATISSE" -
IN SEPTEMBER AT THE .ZACK

The Midnight Company will present a World Premiere - A MODEL FOR MATISSE - based on the 2003 documentary of the same name. The play, co-written by the film's writer/director Barbara F. Freed and Midnight's Joe Hanrahan, directed by Ellie Schwetye, will run September 12 through September 21 at the .ZACK theatre. Tickets will be available through MetroTix.com and will go on sale later in the summer. Specific performance dates and times, photos and invites will be coming later to the press as well.

The play presents the relatively little known and tender relationship ("one of the great love affairs of art history" - The Philadelphia Inquirer) between one of the twentieth century's greatest artists, Henri Matisse and Sister Jacques-Marie, who inspired him to create what he considered the masterpiece of his life's work - the revolutionary Chapel of the Rosary in the perched Mediterranean village of Vence in France. Matisse considered Sister Jacques the "true initiator" of the revolutionary chapel.

It was coincidence or fate or something that continued to bring Sister Jacques back into Matisse's life. But after she created one particular piece of art, Matisse said "That should be a stained glass window. We can put it in your chapel." Sister Jacques replied "We don't have a chapel. Just a leaky garage that we pray in," and Matisse said "I'll design a chapel for you." Thus began a four-year odyssey, featuring the two of them in constant struggle with a conservative church, a scandal-seeking press, a skeptical public, and even with close friends of Matisse like Picasso, who scolded him for doing a church. But their four years of tireless work and faithful commitment resulted in a masterpiece, a timeless artistic testament to the spirit.

Ellie Schwetye will direct A MODEL FOR MATISSE. An Artistic Director for SATE Theatre Ensemble, she will appear in their production of ANTIGONE this August. She recently directed AS YOU LIKE IT for SIUE Summer Theatre (a revival of an award-winning SATE production), and PHOTOGRAPH 51 for West End Players. She has directed for Midnight previously (LITTLE THING BIG THING and JUDGMENT AT NUREMBERG), and directed Midnight's Joe Hanrahan in SATE productions of ONE FLEA SPARE and DOCTOR FAUSTUS (and Joe directed Ellie in SATE's CUDDLES.)

Rachel Hanks will portray Sister Jacques-Marie, marking her debut with Midnight (though she served as Joe's Assistant Director on CUDDLES for SATE.) She's appeared in Stray Dog productions of ANGELS IN AMERICA, A DOLL'S HOUSE and HEDDA GABLER, and in SATE productions of FIRST IMPRESSIONS and AS YOU LIKE IT (both productions). She's been recognized with St. Louis Critics Circle Best Supporting Actress Awards for both A DOLL'S HOUSE and AS YOU LIKE IT.

Joe Hanrahan will appear as Henri Matisse. Midnight's Artistic Director, he's been seen recently in their productions of JUDGMENT AT NUREMBERG, APOLOGY/FAUSTUS & THE HUNCHBACK VARIATIONS and CHARLIE JOHNSON READS ALL OF PROUST, as well as in his own scripts (AUDITION and PATIENT #47) at the Crawl and (NOW PLAYING THIRD BASE FOR THE ST. LOUIS CARDINALS...BOND, JAMES BOND) at The Fringe. He's also been seen in DOCTOR FAUSTUS (SATE) and THE CRUCIBLE (Stray Dog.)

The co-writer on the project, Barbara F. Freed, is a retired Professor of French Studies at Carnegie Mellon University, where her work was divided between cultural art history, particularly 20th Century artists in Southern France, and Research in Second Language Acquisition. She has taught and lived extensively in France, where she has directed several artistic and academic projects. In addition to writing and directing the documentary, A MODEL FOR MATISSE, which was awarded the Pierre Salinger Award for Best Documentary at the 2005 Avignon/New York Film Festival, and the Animavision and Digital Cut Award for Best Film for Television at the 2004 International Festival of Films on Art in Montreal, she has written two related books: Artists And Their Museums On The Riviera (Abrams, 1998) and a translation of Sister Jacque's book, Henri Matisse: The Vence Chapel (republished in 2014 by Chaveau). In 2010, she was inducted as an Officer dans l'Ordre des Palmes Academiques by the French Ambassador to the United States, and she has been an artist-in-residence at La Fondation d'art in La Napoule, France.

LINK to Vence Chapel video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPFSe8kk9A>
MidnightCompany.com