



CAMPING WITH HENRY & TOM

By Mark St. Germain

Jan 24 - Mar 3

TAPROOT THEATRE
COMPANY

BETWEEN THE LINES

Taproot Theatre Company's
Subscription Newsletter

Volume 26, Issue 1

BOX OFFICE INFORMATION

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Box Office Hours:
Tuesday - Saturday,
Noon - 5 pm

*On performance days,
the box office phone
is answered until
30 minutes
prior to show time.*

**Tickets always
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**Thank you to our 2018
Jewell Mainstage Season
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Inspired by a real event – three titans of history find themselves stranded in the woods while on a camping in Maryland. Fact and fiction collide for Henry Ford, Thomas Edison and President Warren G. Harding as they try to kill time without killing each other in this comedic and dramatic lash of wits and wills.

Taproot Theatre Company will open its 2018 Jewell Mainstage Season the Mark St. Germain drama, *Camping with Henry and Tom*. The four person show features three titans of history: Henry Ford, Thomas Edison and Warren G. Harding. Taproot's Producing Artistic Director, Scott Nolte, directs.

Nolte is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society and a past president of Theatre Puget Sound. Most recently, he has directed *Relativity*, *Busman's Honeymoon*, *Evidence of Things Unseen* and *The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge* for Taproot Theatre.

The cast features **Rob Burgess** (Seattle Rep's *Sherlock Holmes and the American Problem*) as Thomas Edison, **Frank Lawler** (Taproot Theatre's *Joyful Noise*) as President Warren G. Harding, **David Pichette** (5th Avenue Theatre's *The Pajama Game*) as Henry Ford and **Kevin Pitman** (Taproot Theatre's *Busman's Honeymoon*) as Colonel Edmund Starling.

Following *Camping with Henry and Tom* is Regina Taylor's *Crowns*. Faith Bennett Russell (Taproot Theatre's *A Civil War Christmas*) will direct the ensemble cast.



*David Pichette, Frank Lawler and Rob Burgess star in Mark St. Germain's
Camping with Henry and Tom
at Taproot Theatre.*

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Previews: Jan 24 & 25 at 7:30pm | **Opening:** Jan 26 at 8:00pm

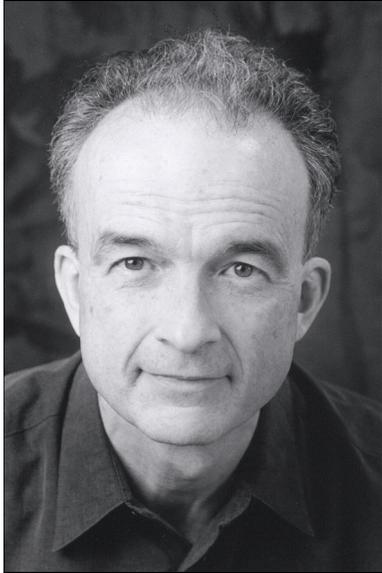
Running: Jan 24 - Mar 3 | **PWYC:** Jan 31 at 7:30pm

Show Times: Wed & Thur, 7:30 pm; Fri & Sat, 8:00 pm; Sat Matinee, 2:00 pm

Running Time: 1 hour and 45 minutes
including one 15-minute intermission

Camping with Henry and Tom is recommended for ages 14 and above for strong language and adult themes. Children under 5 are never admitted.

Actor Spotlight: David Pichette



Veteran Seattle actor David Pichette plays Henry Ford in *Camping with Henry and Tom*.

Where are you originally from?

I grew up in Montana, spent two years in Minneapolis after school, three years in various states in the South, six years in NYC and then had the good sense to come to Seattle.

What brought you to Seattle?

I did a tour with four actors from Seattle (Jeff Steitzer, John Gilbert, Lynn Tyrrell, and Vicki Carver) who made Seattle sound like Theatre Mecca, so I moved here. They were right.

Why acting?

In any art, you don't choose it - it chooses you.

You are having quite a prolific career in Seattle. What have been some of your favorite shows to work on?

After 35 years here, it's hard to say. I suppose a few would be *Of Mice and Men* and *School for Wives* at The Empty Space, *Jumpers* at ACT, and *1776* at The 5th Avenue.

I understand you have wanted to have someone produce *Camping with Henry and Tom* for quite a while. What is it about this play that is so interesting to you?

I'd heard of it 15 or 20 years ago and it seemed very relevant then - it's even more so now. In fact, it seems like it was written in the last year; it's uncanny.

Does playing a real historical person create any extra challenges for you as an actor?

Not really. You aren't doing a documentary, after all. It's just a character in a play. Knowing how much or how little research to do can be challenging. It's a play, and the character is who he is in the play, not in history. Research can backfire. Pity the poor guy who looks up the real Richard the Third and discovers the whole play is a pack of Tudor lies.

Have you played any other historical characters? Who?

The best known one I've played is Richard Nixon. I have done the brilliant play *Nixon's Nixon* three times, and it's one of my favorite times I've spent on stage.

What's the best piece of advice you were ever given, theatrical or otherwise?

Steal from the best.

Where is your favorite place to go camping?

For me, the outdoors are pretty much what you have to go through to get from one interesting place to the next.

What inspires you?

Great music played at white heat, old associates knocking it out of the park and watching the light go on in the eyes of a young actor.

Is there anything else you would like to say?

Best way of making a living - EVER!



Pichette joy riding in the replica Model T while it was still under construction in Taproot Theatre's scene shop.

The Adventures of the Vagabonds: The Friendship of Henry Ford and Thomas Edison

The great friendship between **Henry Ford** (1863-1947), founder of the Ford Motor Company, and **Thomas Edison** (1847-1931), the world famous inventor, began at a convention of Edison Illuminating Company employees in 1896. Ford, who would go on to revolutionize the auto industry with his innovative assembly line manufacturing technique, began his career at Edison Illuminating Company in Michigan and soon worked his way up to chief engineer.

Ford had idolized Edison since childhood and relished the chance to meet his hero, the inventor of the light bulb. At the convention, Ford impressed Edison by telling him his idea for a gasoline powered car. Edison was thrilled by the idea of a car with its own self-contained power source and Ford cherished the personal encouragement from his idol.

Over time, the two men became good friends. When Edison purchased a winter home in Fort Meyers, FL, Ford visited frequently. In 1914 the pair set out to explore the Florida Everglades together, the first of many such adventures. In 1916 Ford purchased a house in Fort Meyers, right next door to Edison's. The two houses were separated by a fence with a gate that was always left open. Said Edison of Ford, "I can only say that in the fullest meaning of the term, he is my friend."

One of Ford's stated goals when he developed his automobile was to "build a motor car for the great multitude" so that anyone who wanted to could explore what he called "God's great open spaces." Over the course of the next ten years the two friends set out to explore the country in a caravan of Ford's cars. They were frequently joined by tire manufacturer **Harvey Firestone** (1868-1938) and nature essayist **John Burroughs** (1837-1921) and liked calling themselves "The Four Vagabonds."

Between 1914 and 1924 the Vagabonds travelled together each summer, making stops all over the country and often inviting other powerful men to join them. **President Warren G. Harding** came with them on their excursion to Maryland in 1921 and two years later, they also paid a visit to **President Calvin Coolidge's** summer home in Vermont. Since each participant was well accustomed to luxury, the expeditions never lacked the comforts of home. During the 1921 trip to Maryland President Harding had even brought along a player piano. They were also well publicized. Ford and Firestone didn't miss the opportunity to use their own recreational freedom as a sales pitch for the cars and tires they produced. Newspapers followed them wherever they went and Newsreel films of their exploits were shown in movie theatres across the country.

Burroughs died in 1921, Harding would die in office in 1923, and eventually Edison's health also began to fade. When Edison was confined to a wheelchair in his later years, Henry Ford bought one too so that the two of them could have races around their Fort Meyers estates. When Edison died in 1931 his son presented Ford with a sealed test tube which was said to contain the great inventors last breath. That test tube remains on display at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, MI to this day, a testament to their lasting friendship.

You can learn more about the camping adventures of Henry Ford and Thomas Edison by visiting these websites:

<http://www.history.com/news/ford-and-edisons-excellent-camping-adventures/>
<https://www.thehenryford.org/collections-and-research/digital-resources/popular-topics/the-vagabonds/>
<http://blogs.detroitnews.com/history/1996/08/06/henry-ford-and-thomas-edison-a-friendship-of-giants/>
<http://hfha.org/the-ford-story/the-illustrious-vagabonds/>



Above: Frank Lawler as Warren G. Harding, David Pichette as Henry Ford, and Rob Burgous as Thomas Edison in Camping with Henry and Tom at Taproot Theatre.

Photo by Robert Wade.

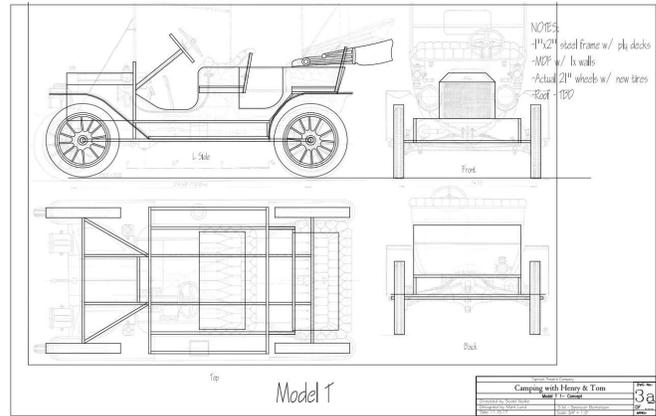
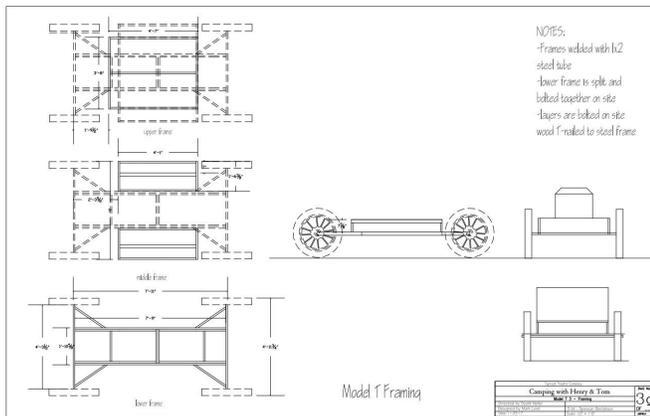
Below, Left to Right: Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, President Warren G. Harding and Harvey Firestone on a camping trip in 1921.

Photo retrieved from

www.history.com/news/ford-and-edisons-excellent-camping-adventures



Production Spotlight: How to Build a Model T Ford



Taproot’s design team had a unique challenge when they started working on *Camping with Henry and Tom*. Since the play frequently references Henry Ford’s personal Model T, it was determined that a replica of the classic car must be built.

The Model T Ford was the first car to be designed for the masses. Ford’s revolutionary assembly line manufacturing technique created a simple car, built with 84 repeatable tasks and interchangeable parts, that could be produced quickly. At peak efficiency, Ford’s Highland Park factory built one Model T every three minutes. The company was able to produce so many vehicles that the cost to own one plummeted to a mere \$260.

“It will be so low in price that no man making a good salary will be unable to own one – and enjoy with his family the blessing of hours of pleasure in God’s great open spaces,” Ford said at the time.

While Taproot’s team didn’t need to bother with many of the more complicated aspects of car construction, like a working engine, the build nevertheless presented some new and exciting challenges for Design Director Mark Lund and Scenic Carpenter Tim Samland.

Has it been fun building a Model T?

Mark Lund: Yes, recreating and replicating things is always fun (and challenging).

Tim Samland: This has been one of the more fun things I’ve built. I’ve never built anything like this and I enjoyed the challenge of figuring out how to manufacture all the pieces and then put them together in a way that can come apart and be put back together.

Have you ever built a car before?

ML: A very rudimentary car for a car chase scene in *Bullshot Crummond*, a detective movie parody, Taproot produced in 1999. It was a large black box with headlights. We’d staged it so that two sets of people had steering wheels and they alternated popping up behind the windshield.

TS: First car for me. I have a classic mustang at home that I spend many hours working on, but I’ve never built one from the ground up.

Where did you turn for instructions or design inspiration?

ML: Like any set piece, it’s all about research, research, research. I used actual Model T plans as a starting point and drafted over those in AutoCAD. For construction, I relied heavily, even more than usual, on Tim. He helped me determine what should be made of steel, and how, and he welded at his shop. He always contributes a lot to how things will be built, but for the Model T, I had some basic drawings and he then helped me flesh it all out.

How accurate is this replica to an authentic 1920s Model T, aside from not having an engine?

ML: Because the Model T needs to have actors in it, the scaled size is basically 1 to 1. Only the front end is a few inches shorter. So the size is virtually the same. The wheels and steering wheel are originals

Production Spotlight: How to Build a Model T Ford

from the 1910s - 20s. Hubcaps, radiator cap and *Ford* radiator are accurate reproductions. Some things like upholstery, tires, the trunk and windshield are good approximations. So though much of what is seen is wood and not metal, I'd say it will *look* about 80-90% accurate. Enough that it fits in our budget and will help the audience suspend their disbelief.

What aspects of this build have you found the most challenging?

ML: The challenge was deciding which features were the most important to replicate as close as possible and which features the audience wouldn't notice as too different. Curves are difficult on any set piece, so we took some liberties by combining some different era cars to eliminate curves and contours.

TS: Each step is very time consuming, there are never enough hours in the day.

How many hours do you estimate you spent building the Model T replica?

ML: It's hard to tell exactly but between design, building, painting and installation probably about 250-300 man hours between 3 people, but mostly Tim.

TS: Probably about 150 to 200 hours for me.

Were there any specific parts that were particularly difficult to find or create?

ML: With the internet a person could literally buy just about every single original or reproduced part and build an actual car. You can also buy actual cars. Our decisions were about what was worth the investment and finding a good price. We ended up purchasing actual wood spiked wheels from the 1920's on eBay. Plus several brass detailed reproduction parts that have the Ford logo. Most everything else was fabricated by us.

TS: The wheels are original Model T but the tires are new motorcycle tires. We had to manufacture metal rings that bolt to the wheels to keep the tires on.

Is there anything else you'd like to say?

ML: There will also be a somewhat realistic forest set with trees, rocks, etc. This is a unique show in that we had to budget materials and labor for the set and the Model T as if they were two separate sets. Fortunately, the smaller cast size allowed for that.

TS: I think this Model T should receive its own Theatre Puget Sound Gregory Award! Hopefully we'll be able to hang on to it long enough get it in the Greenwood Car Show next summer!



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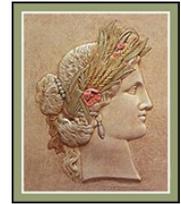


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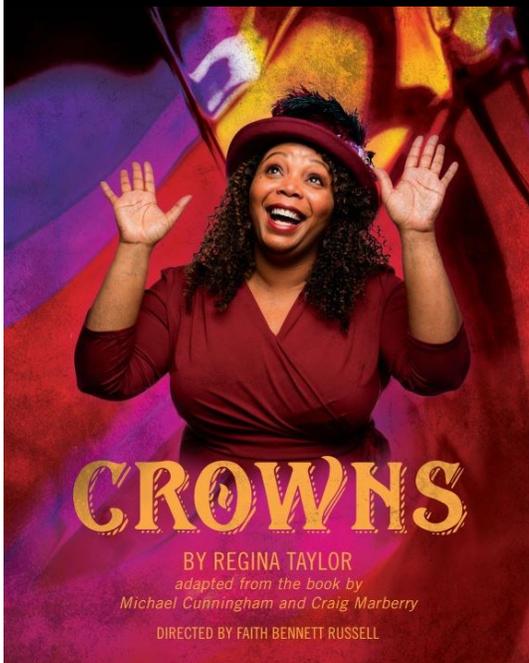
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Crowns

By Regina Taylor

Directed by Faith Bennett Russell

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Gospel music and storytelling come together to surprise, delight and remind us all of the unique and diverse ways we express ourselves. When a young woman from Brooklyn struggles to find her place in the world, she is surrounded by a community of women that transcend place and time to infuse her with stories of faith, fortitude and pride.

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