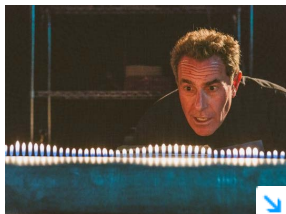


Rutgers goes off-B'way in 'That Physics Show'

Bill Nutt, Correspondent

10 a.m. EST November 28, 2015



(Photo: --Photo by Donnell Culver)

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A cross between Blue Man Group and Bill Nye, the Science Guy, with a dash of "The Big Bang Theory."

That is how star David Maiullo and producer-director Eric Krebs characterize "That Physics Show," the theatrical production they are currently preparing for an off-Broadway run.

Maiullo takes the stage to demonstrate a plethora of forces and properties, including motion, momentum, friction, as well as both sound and light waves.

As physics support specialist at Rutgers University for nearly 30 years, Maiullo has plenty of experience leading science demonstrations in front of educators and the general public.

But "That Physics Show" is more than a lecture. The production uses whiz-bang theatrics to entertain and to de-mystify a subject that often causes considerable head-scratching and glazed eyes among high school students (to say nothing of adults).

"Science allows us to expose the things all around us that we don't normally see," said Maiullo, a Piscataway resident.

"People seem to like things that break or catch on fire," observed Maiullo with a laugh. Another draw is the routine in which Maiullo is propelled across the stage by a large fire extinguisher.

Those theatrical touches are encouraged by Krebs, a professor emeritus at Rutgers.

"This (show) is a revue," said Krebs, who taught in the theater department at Rutgers. "But instead of a musical revue, it's a physics revue."

Starting at Rutgers

"That Physics Show" was born in the halls of Rutgers. When Maiullo was hired in the mid-1980s, he was charged with advancing the school's scientific demonstrations.

"I wanted to make sure we were reaching the public, especially kids," said Maiullo, who

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is a physics support specialist in the department of physics and astronomy on the Piscataway Rutgers campus. "So many kids are bored with science or scared of it."

Maiullo also reached out to educators around the country. "I wanted to make our demonstrations bigger and better," he said.

After almost a decade of working, Maiullo pulled together some of the most interesting demonstrations into a 30-minute program that he was able to take to schools, libraries, and senior centers.

As the demonstrations improved, so did Maiullo's skills as a presenter. "Even five years into working at Rutgers, it was scary for me," he admitted. "After about 10 years, I didn't even notice."



David Maiullo and his assistant, Kelsey Lane Dies, demonstrate properties of physics during "That Physics Show," an off-Broadway science revue. Maiullo honed his skills as a presenter in his job as physics support specialist at Rutgers University in Piscataway. (Photo: ~Photo by Donnell Culver)

One of his presentations about 15 years ago was attended by Krebs, a veteran producer whose Broadway credits include Neil Simon's "The Dinner Party."

"I've always had an interest in science, and I had heard about what David was doing as a presented," said Krebs, who was teaching in the Rutgers theater department. "I came away wowed by the theatricality of what he did."

At the time, Krebs was teaching an introduction to theater class. He invited Maiullo as a guest lecturer.

"I wanted to show my students that 'theater' could be anything that people watch," Krebs said. "I wanted them to see the dynamics that were possible of someone doing something on a stage."

Going on, staying connected

Krebs later left Rutgers to pursue his work as a producer and director. Maiullo continued to expand his demonstration programs, branching into TV. He has appeared on The Science Channel and The Weather Channel, among others.



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The two men kept in touch over the years. Several months ago, Krebs approached Maiullo about developing his demonstrations into a full-blown theatrical production.

"That Physics Show" is current in previews at the Playroom Theater in Manhattan. The official opening night is Thursday, Dec. 3, with performances continuing into 2016.

The production has been fine-tuned during the previews, and Maiullo said he has valued Krebs's theatrical experience.

"I know that people are looking for entertainment," Maiullo said. "They're not looking for a physics lesson."

"Eric will make suggestions about my patter," he added. "We're working on the language."



David Maiullo and his assistant, Kelsey Lane Dies, demonstrate properties of physics during "That Physics Show," an off-Broadway science revue. Maiullo honed his skills as a presenter in his job as physics support specialist at Rutgers University in Piscataway. (Photo: PHOTO: Donnell Culver)

Maiullo believed that the timing for his show is right. "People are more aware of the sciences," he said. "Look at 'The Big Bang Theory.' program about a group of physicists who are fun or funny couldn't have been done 20 years ago."

Krebs said he has been heartened by the response of the first preview audiences. He credited Maiullo for his skill as a presenter. "David brings a wonder to it," he said.

"This is a show for everybody," Krebs said. "I thought I was producing a show for curious adults, but we've been getting family audiences. I've never seen a show that has had such instantaneous word-of-mouth."

Both Maiullo and Krebs would welcome being able to move to a venue with more capacity than the 70-seat Playroom Theater. "We could do even more fantastic things in a larger space," Maiullo said. "But this is a nice way to start."

The two men would also be open to such options as TV programs or a series of YouTube clips.

"This show is exciting and entertaining, palpable and fun," Krebs said. "That's the

mission of our show. We want to create something that will still be valid 20 years from now.”

Maiullo said that working full-time at Rutgers and then travelling each day from his home to work on “That Physics Show” in Manhattan is potentially exhausting.

“What’s the reward for me? I like that fact that we can get people more excited about science and more comfortable with science,” Maiullo said. “If I can convey this message, that’s fun.”

“THAT PHYSICS SHOW”

WHAT: David Maiullo, who has been the physics support specialist at Rutgers University for nearly 30 years, stars in a theatrical production that highlights the “magic” behind everyday physics. The “physics revue” is directed by Eric Krebs, a former Rutgers theater professor who first met Maiullo about 15 years ago.

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Thursday, December 3 (opening night). 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays to Fridays; 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Saturdays; 3 p.m. Sundays

WHERE: Playroom Theater, 151 West 46th St. (off Broadway), New York.

TICKETS: \$30

INFORMATION: 866-811-4111 or www.ThatPhysicsShow.com





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