

PLEASE KEEP ALL CELL PHONES AND PAGERS TURNED OFF WHEN IN THE THEATRE. THANK YOU.

Please Note

- Food and drink must not be brought into the theatre
- The use of cameras or recording devices is strictly prohibited
- Smoking is not permitted in the Noel Fine Arts Center
- In the case of an emergency, ushers will assist audience members at each exit

Theatre & Dance Department productions are partially funded by the Student Government Association

The printing of this program was not paid for out of GPR Funds

The UWSP Department of Theatre & Dance is fully accredited by the National Association of Schools of Theatre and the National Association of Schools of Dance

2009-2010 Theatre & Dance
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BFA Acting Program Coordinator

Jeffrey Stephens
Assistant Professor of Theatre
BA/BS Drama Program Coordinator

John Strassburg
Dance Program Accompanist

Director's Notes

In 1998, writer and social critic Barbara Ehrenreich began an immersive journalistic experience that would last (on and off) for several years before compiling her adventures into the best-seller *Nickel and Dimed – On (Not) Getting By in America*. The idea was simple enough: following the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Barbara wanted to get a closer look at the real problems of the working poor. In three cities she tried to find a place to live and a typical low-wage job, and then live on the wages with enough money saved to pay the next month's rent. She managed this task with mixed success, and found that "unskilled" work requires quite a bit more skill than she anticipated.

The core issues in *Nickel and Dimed* are the real-life hardships facing the working poor. A quick glance at the numbers is surprising. The current system for measuring poverty in the United States was developed in the 1960's, and the method has remained largely unchanged since then (defined roughly as three times the minimum food budget). Under that measure, the current poverty line in the U.S. for a family of three is just over \$18,000 annual income. Working full time at minimum wage earns an annual salary of just under \$15,000 a year. To put those numbers into perspective, the Economic Policy Institute suggests that a basic, paycheck-to-paycheck budget with no retirement savings or emergency funds for a family of three should be just over \$40,000 (over double the poverty line).

While the broad issues surrounding minimum wage are serious, *Nickel and Dimed* gives a snapshot of the dozen down-to-earth challenges for the working poor. The real stories of her coworkers paint a startling picture of how the problems stemming from low-wage life quickly add up. Even for middle-class families today, an emergency trip to the doctor or dentist is costly. Barbara's coworkers throughout the project would have to spend an entire month's pay just to go to the emergency room; we see people living off of ibuprofen when their employers don't provide health care plans they can afford (when they provide one at all). Single mothers struggle to afford child-care for their kids while they work, and we end up with a 5-year-old babysitting their 3-year-old sibling.

Unable to afford a deposit or find a cheap enough apartment, many end up living in hotels, in the long run paying triple what reasonable rent would be. At \$80 a night, you'd have an annual "rent" of about \$30,000.

Don't get me wrong here: Barbara's experiment has plenty of flaws, and certainly drew its fair share of criticism, one person even going to the length of repeating the experiment under more extreme circumstances just to prove that you can escape poverty (Adam Shepard's book, *Scratch Beginnings*). Shepard's project has its own flaws, and to my mind highlights sexism in employment opportunities for the low-wage world. It also shows just what a difference being young and in excellent health can make. Shepard was a college scholarship athlete and got good jobs with a moving company and in day labor, something likely unavailable to a middle-aged mother of two.

All that said, *Nickel and Dimed* draws me because it presents these problems, but not a solution. Wherever you fall in the debate, money is certainly something that hits deeply within us all. How we as a country can best help those struggling is one of the most divisive political issues out there, and has been for decades. I keep getting asked what my goal for this production is, or what my political views on the matter are. I can't say that I know how to fix the problems of poverty in America, nor do I think there's a single solution. Barbara Ehrenreich's project (and Joan Holden's excellent theatrical adaptation) serves as a mechanism for increasing awareness. My goal is that this production stimulates conversation on the topic. Hopefully, we all become little more thoughtful the next time we tip a server or shop in a discount chain.

Whether you agree or disagree with Barbara's assessment of the issue, it's certainly an interesting ride. Most of all, I hope that you enjoy the show.

~Matthew Crider

Notes from the Props Designer

A theatrical property, commonly referred to as a prop, is any object held or used on stage by an actor for use in furthering the plot or story line of a theatrical production. Smaller props are referred to as "hand props". Larger props may also be set decoration, such as a chair or table. The difference between a set decoration and a prop is use. If the item is not touched by a performer for any reason it is simply a set decoration. If it is touched by the actor in accordance to script requirements or as deemed by the director, it is a prop.

Small acting troupes formed during the renaissance, travelled throughout Europe. These "companies," functioning as cooperatives, pooled resources and divided any income. Many performers provided their own costumes, but special items: stage weapons, furniture or other hand-held devices were considered "company property," thus the term "property," which eventually was shortened to "prop."

⊕ A typical show might have 40 or 50 items. Our production of Nickel and Dimed has close to 400. A cleaning cart with sheets, clean and dirty towels, cleaning products, little bottles of shampoo, and a turkey and cheese sandwich are on the prop list. Almost 40 plates of fake food, shopping carts, items from Kmart, a urine sample container and yes, a used condom are also required. All areas of theatre design and technology provide a challenge, but with this show, props head the list. As we train our students for the next step in their theatre life in a graduate program or in the profession, an experience like this production will add significantly to a resume and portfolio. Former UWSP students have wonderful careers as properties artisans. ⊕

A special thanks to the Properties Design Class last semester and to Leanna and Grace as props technicians. Theatre is always a group effort and this production is no exception.

Stephen G. Sherwin
Props Designer

The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
Department of Theatre & Dance

Presents

Nickel & Dimed

By: Joan Holden

Based on

Nickel & Dimed On (Not) Getting by in America

By: Barbara Ehrenrich

Produced by special arrangement with
Dramatists Play Service, Inc.

Directed by
Matthew Crider*



Stage Manager
David LaRose

Lighting Designer
Nathan Freberg

Costume Designer
Scott Frost

Scenic Designer
Cliff Hannon

Properties Designer
Stephen Sherwin*

Sound Designer
Christopher Walls

Dramaturgy by
Bob Wolensky~UWSP - Department of Sociology

*Denotes Faculty/Staff

Acknowledgements:

Product Designs by Stephanie Wilke
UWSP-Graphic Design Major
Perkins Restaurant

Nickel & Dimed

Cast

Barbara.....Emily McCarthy
Joan, Margz, etc.....Tricia Collenbourg
Hector, Maddy, etc.....Lauren Kaezre
Carliz, Melissa, etc.....Meggan Utzch
Gail, Holly, etc.....Elizabeth McMonagle
George, Pete, etc.....Michael Gastaldi
Ted, Howard, etc.....Jacob J. Horstmeyer

Place:

America, 1990's

Act I: Florida

Act II: Maine

Act III: Minnesota

"Nickel & Dimed" is performed without an intermission.

Run time is 90 minutes

Production Staff

Assistant Stage Managers.....Melissa Aldridge, Britni Hart
Assistant Lighting Designer.....Kara Schmelz
Scenic Charge.....Benjamin Kern
Properties Technician.....Leanna Vannarom, Grace Coyne
Deck Run Crew.....Lori Engelmeier, Elaine Grishaber, Devin Handel
Emma Kennedy, Leanna Kryszak, Sadie Langemo
Jeremy Parker, Derek Prestly
Costume Run Crew.....Matthew Briggs, Erica Figurin, Evan Garry
Amanda Knutson, Edward Lupella, Megan Weinaug
Costume Shop Manager.....Wendy Dolan*
Scene Shop Manager.....Christopher Pheiffer*
Costume Shop Assistants.....Ella Floyd, Scott Frost, Cece Hill
Maria Hintze, Dan Olson, Kelsey Schmitz, Libby Stadstad
Sara Tan, Meggan Utech, Shannon Ward, Amber Wuttke
Scene Shop Assistants.....Mercer Aplin, Andrew Broomell
Kyle Coyer, Nate Fitzwater-Butchart, Cliff Hannon, Nick Reising
Michael Trudeau, Christopher Walls, Jennifer Wilson
Scene & Costume Shop Crew.....Theatre & Dance
Practicum Students
Administrative Department Associate.....Ruth Daniels*
Student Theatre & Dance Office Assistants.....David LaRose
Elizabeth McMonagle, Jesse Schmitz-Boyd
Box Office Supervisor.....Chris Seefeldt*
House Managers.....Katy Beth Austin, Andrea Boehlke
Ginny Glaser, Shaun Krueger, Emily McCarthy
Public Relations Assistants.....Theatre & Dance
Practicum Students

*Denotes Faculty/Staff

Meet the Company

Aldridge, Melissa (*Assistant Stage Manager*) Sophomore, BS Biology Major from Mosinee, WI.

Austin, Katy Beth (*House Manager*) Senior, BFA Design Technology Major from Portage, WI. Recipient of the James Vorland Technical Theatre Scholarship.

Boehlke, Andrea (*House Manager*) Junior, BFA Acting Major from Random Lake, WI.

Collenburg, Tricia (*Joan, Marge, etc*) Junior, BFA Acting Major from Milwaukee, WI. Recipient of Theatre Arts Scholarship in Drama.

Coyne, Grace (*Properties Technician*) Freshman, BA/BS Drama Major and Music Minor from Dodgeville, WI.

Freberg, Nathan (*Lighting Designer*) Junior, BFA Design Technology Major from Menomonie, WI.

Frost, Scott (*Costume Designer*) Junior, BFA Design Technology Major from Kenosha, WI. Recipient of the Baruch/Bridgeman Award for Outstanding Achievement as a Player and the Kassi Dallmann Memorial Scholarship.

Gastaldi, Michael (*George, Pete, etc.*) Senior, BFA Musical Theatre Major from Kenosha, WI.

Glaser, Ginny (*House Manager*) Freshman, BFA Musical Theatre Major from Fargo, ND. Recipient of the Theatre Arts Scholarship in Musical Theatre.

Hannon, Cliff (*Scenic Designer*) Senior, BFA Design Technology Major from DePere, WI. Recipient of the Anne Gilfrey Schierl Fine Arts Award in Drama and the Sentry Scholarship.

Hart, Britni (*Assistant Stage Manager*) Freshman, BFA Design Technology Major from Oshkosh, WI. Recipient of the Theatre Arts Scholarship in Design Technology.

Horstmeier, Jacob J. (*Ted, Howard, etc.*) Sophomore, BFA Acting Major and Dance Minor from Random Lake, WI.

Meet the Company (continued)

Kacere, Lauren (*Hector, Maddy, etc.*) Sophomore, BFA Acting Major from Johnston, IA. Recipient of the Theatre Arts Scholarship in Acting.

Kern, Benjamin (*Scenic Charge*) Junior, BFA Design Technology Major from Kaukauna, WI. Recipient of the Isabella Prize in Student Directing and the Anne Gilfrey Schierl Fine Arts Award in Design Technology.

Krueger, Shaun (*House Manager*) Junior, BA Arts Management Major from Keil, WI.

LaRose, David (*Stage Manager*) Senior, BFA Design Technology and History Major from Plover WI. Recipient of the Anne Gilfrey Schierl Fine Arts Award in Design Technology, Crosby Scholarship and the Isabelle Stelmahoske London Scholarship and Kennedy Center American College Regional Theatre Festival Society of Property Artists and Managers Outstanding Achievement in Properties Design.



McCarthy, Emily (*Barbara*) Senior, BFA Acting Major from Madison, WI.



McMonagle, Elizabeth (*Gail, Holly, etc.*) Senior, BFA Musical Theatre Major and Business Minor from DePere, WI. Recipient of the Festival of the Arts Scholarship and the James Mueller Scholarship.

Schmelz, Kara (*Assistant Lighting Designer*) Junior, BA Drama Major from Delavan, WI.

Utech, Meggan (*Carlie, Melissa, etc.*) Senior, BFA Musical Theatre Major from Hartford, WI. Recipient of the Theatre Arts Scholarship in Musical Theatre and the Backstage Musical Theatre Scholarship.

Vannarom, Leanna (*Properties Technician*) Freshman, BFA Design Technology Major from Sussex, WI.

Walls, Christopher (*Sound Designer*) Sophomore, BFA Design Technology Major from Pleasant Prairie, WI.

BACKSTAGE

The Department of Theatre & Dance welcomes support for our educational and artistic activities through a variety of programs, including existing scholarships and endowments, special projects support, bequests and planned gifts. For more information about contributing to the Department of Theatre & Dance, please refer to the enclosed Backstage envelope, or contact CJ Robinson, the COFAC Director of Development, at 715-346-3056.

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