

Marilyn Bauer: Audience benefits from small towns' big thinking

By Marilyn Bauer

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Sometimes living in a small town is just that — living in a small town.

People think small. They are content with small things. They like isolation, sedation, predictability. In a small town, people dismiss new ideas by saying, “We always do it this way,” or “if it ain’t broke don’t fix it.” They are heavily invested in things staying the same.

The towns on the Treasure Coast might be small, but the thinking is big. Thus, so is the treasure. The true riches in our area are not Spanish doubloons, but individuals who are big thinkers, no matter what the odds.

Take Allen Cornell at Riverside Theatre in Vero Beach. His talents range from set design to administration and include play-writing and education. His spirit is indomitable. While some shuffle their feet and mutter about a poor economy, Cornell is about to launch the largest, grandest, most expensive show in the history of the Riverside. In less than a month, he will be in New York City, auditioning actors, singers, dancers and musicians for its February production of “42nd Street.”

John Loesser over at the Lyric Theatre in Stuart is working with the 3 Redneck Tenors to develop a new show that will tour the United States. **His work with multiple Grammy Award-winning musician Nestor Torres and Lisa Rhodes of the Education Foundation of Martin County is just the start of a program that will reach any number of children in our community — and beyond.**

He also is producing a national tour of the work of his father, Frank Loesser, with “Guys and Dolls and More.” Starring his sister, Emily, and Ron Raines of “Guiding Light” fame, it will play the Lyric in December 2010.

International art star Betsy Damon is here this week as part of phase two of Eco Art Treasure Coast. To understand how big a star she is, visit www.keepersofthewaters.org/.

Damon will be training apprentices in this dynamic art form, or, if you will, home-growing eco-artists who will continue to work right here in our backyard, The project already has grown beyond the immediate area to encompass all five South Florida watersheds. According to Mary Jo Agerstoun of South Florida Environmental Project — a big thinker who is a big part of Eco Art Treasure Coast — it will make the area a global center for environmental art.

And while Jupiter and West Palm Beach are technically just outside the Treasure Coast area, they are very much a part of our rich cultural landscape as well.

Today, one of the most important contemporary artists in the world, William Kentridge — named by Time magazine as one of the “100 Most Important People in the World — is visiting the Norton Museum in West

Palm Beach, which is mounting the most important modern art retrospective in its history. Kentridge will speak there at 6 p.m. Friday.

Andrew Kato, the artistic director at The Maltz Jupiter Theatre, just won a rave review from the New York Times for his play “Academy,” which was developed in Jupiter. On Tuesday, the Maltz will present the world premier of “Fanny Brice: The Real Funny Girl,” which Kato commissioned from Chicago-based director David H. Bell. The venue may be regional, but the impact is national — even international.

Not bad for a necklace of small towns on the ocean — and reason perhaps to think we may expect even more.

Marilyn Bauer writes on art and entertainment. This column reflects her opinion. Follow her blog at www.tcpalm.com/bauer. Contact her at (772) 692-8906 or marilyn.bauer@scripps.com.



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