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'The Addams Family' evolution

July 24, 2012 by Kathy Janich — [Leave a Comment](#)



Photo by Jeremy Daniel

"The Addams Family" haunts the Fox Theatre on Aug. 14-19.

"Da Da Da Dum, snap, snap, Da Da Da Dum" ... go ahead and snap, you know you want to. This legendary theme song by Vic Mizzy will forever be a part of American popular culture. For Douglas Sills, who plays Gomez in the national tour of *The Addams Family*, the kooky clan is one he's happy to be a part of.

"I knew how pervasive *The Addams Family* was in that period of American media," says Sills (right). "It was up there with *Lost in Space* and those things that we have come to think of as fundamentally American."



Developed by Charles Addams, the Addams family first appeared as a comic in *The New Yorker* from 1938 to 1988.

But it was the 1964 TV show that cemented the family as an American icon. From Lurch's basso profundo "You rang?" to Gomez's feathery kisses up Morticia's arm, many of the show's elements found their way into our collective unconsciousness.

The family has been featured in a 1972 *Scooby-Doo* TV movie, two Saturday morning cartoons, a 1998 TV show, two feature films, a direct-to-video movie, a popular pinball game, and now a Broadway musical.

Nostalgia draws most people into the show. Whether someone is a fan of the comic, TV show or movies, the family they'll see onstage is the one that everyone knows and loves, and it begins with the iconic music.

"Everyone can count on seeing all the characters in the way they remember, but they will see them in a modern, current setting," Sills says. "We talk about Charlie Sheen, health care and texting."

That familiarity, mixed with a fresh take, has made the musical popular. While it closed on Broadway after nine months and 722 performances, the tour continues — in a somewhat different state.

"The script is much changed from Broadway, even much changed from what we started with when we entered rehearsals," Sills explains. "A new plot was added to refocus the show on Gomez and Morticia. It had drifted and was very much about the two young lovers, Wednesday and a young boy named Lucas."

To accommodate the changes, the songs were re-sequenced or replaced. One of the new songs has been a crowd-pleaser for Sills. "They wrote an 11 o'clock number for me called 'Not Today.' It is like a Mamma Rose number in *Gypsy* – an 11 o'clock number that is really quite fun to sing."

He should know. Sills' Broadway resume stretches from the dapper and heroic Percy Blakeney in *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (Tony Award nomination) to the demented dentist in *Little Shop of Horrors*, with plenty of heroes and villains in between.

Sills also enjoys the tender song he shares with daughter Wednesday. "It is a very different tone from the rest of the show," he says. "It is called 'Happy/Sad' —about how love is a complex thing with a lot of gray to it."

Songs like these are what make the Addams family so endearing. When it comes down it, they are just like everyone else. Says Sills, "They are dealing with marriage, raising kids, in-laws, extended family, getting through the day, school work, dating, and all these things that every family deals with, but they are dealing with them under the auspices of this very unusual, macabre, spooky and fun aesthetic."

So sit back and relax. Put a witch's shawl on, get a broomstick you can crawl on, we're going to pay a call on the Addams family.

For more on Sills, visit atlantatheaterfans.com.

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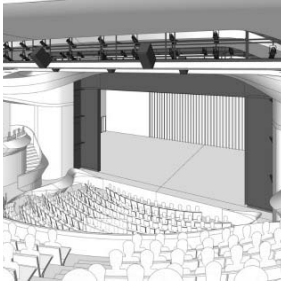
Kenny Norton is a freelance writer who has written web content, articles and marketing/PR materials. He is contributing editor and administrator of www.AtlantaTheaterFans.com.



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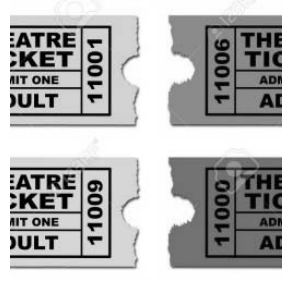
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About Kathy Janich

Kathy Janich, Encore Atlanta's editor, is a longtime arts journalist who has been seeing, working in or writing about the performing arts for most of her life. She's the resident dramaturg at Synchronicity Theatre and a member of the Theatre Communications Group, the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas, Americans for the Arts and the National Arts Marketing Project.

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