

Love is thrilling, heartbreaking in 'Last Five Years'

By **KATIE HUGHES MCKEE**
features@santacruzsentinel.com

Last Friday night, I fell in love with a perfect stranger. His name is Jason Robert Brown, and he is the author and composer of "The Last 5 Years," currently in production at Cabrillo Stage. I was stunned when the evening was over: this man is the successor to Stephen Sondheim. Like Sondheim, Brown supports text with music. His music is similarly plot- and character-driven. And Brown does the master one better on his haunting Jonathan Tunick-like orchestrations: they are his own.

"The Last 5 Years" is the story of a relationship, which becomes a marriage, then crumbles. The two-person play, or "theatrical song cycle," as Brown dubs it, moves both forward and backward in time. It begins at the end of the relationship for Cathy, an aspiring actress, and the beginning for Jamie, a writer on the brink of fame. Cathy moves from crushed: "Still Hurting," "See, I'm Still Smiling," to elated and hopeful: "Goodbye Until Tomorrow," "I Can Do Better Than That." Jamie evolves from grateful and nearly overwhelmed by the success and happiness in his young life: "Shiksa Goddess," "Moving Too Fast," to sadder, wiser and compassionate: "Nobody Needs to Know," "I Could Never Rescue You." Ultimately, the songs ask: Where is the line between unconditional love and co-dependency? How much have I realized – and how much have I rationalized?

The couple is played by Cabrillo Stage veterans Ariel Buck and Andrew Ceglio, a real-life couple who met during 2007's "Little Shop of Horrors," and have been together the last four years. This extremely talented duo delivers the goods, dramatically and vocally. This is a small theater, and nuance is noticed, but they fill the space with Buck's voluptuous voice and Ceglio's comedic gifts.

Artistic director Jon Nor-

IF YOU GO

'THE LAST FIVE YEARS'

WRITTEN BY: Jason Robert Brown

PRESENTED BY: Cabrillo Stage

WHEN: Thursday through Saturday at 8 p.m.; Sundays at 3 p.m., through Aug. 14

WHERE: Black Box Theater at the Crocker Theater on the campus of Cabrillo College, Aptos

TICKETS: Adult: \$16 to \$38. Senior (60+): \$16 to \$36.

Children (6-12): \$16 to \$32

DETAILS: 479-6154 or www.cabrillostage.com

NOTE: There will be another production in the same building. Allow plenty of time to park

dgren has made some interesting choices for Cabrillo Stage's 30th year. He has brought back Lile Cruse, the man who created CS, to be musical director of "Hairspray," next in rep, and veteran Janie Scott to direct and choreograph. But he has chosen three shows that are less than 10 years old, and a director completely new to Cabrillo Stage, Mollye Maxner. Her choices of simple cubes for sets, minimal lighting and quiet costuming allow the audience to focus on the words, the music, and the emotions they evoke. The show's musical director, Mickey McGushin, was appreciative of her sensitivity in this area, and of the fact that she and Nordgren ultimately made the decision not to have an intermission in order to keep the artistic integrity of the work. Support this decision! Come early and buy concessions – and use the restroom!

McGushin told me that Brown's is the music young people now bring in for auditions, as Sondheim's was in our day. At 81, Sondheim to me is like an old cat: I know he won't be around much longer, and I know how sad I will be when he's gone. Good to know his successor is already here.

The glorious past and uncertain future of the New York Times

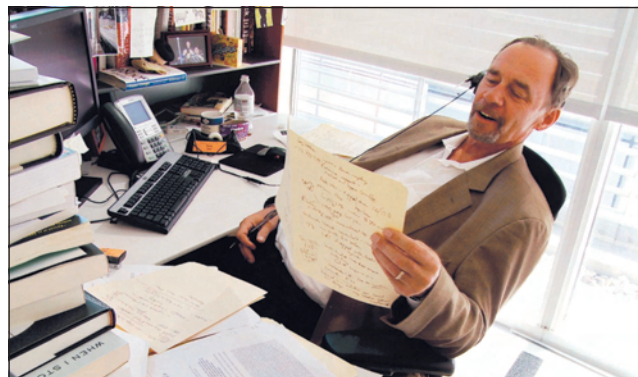
By **WALLACE BAINE**
wbaine@santacruzsentinel.com

The sometimes affectionate [and sometimes not] nickname in the news industry for the New York Times is the "Gray Lady."

It's a moniker that has for decades succinctly captured the Times's strengths as an organization – stability, authority, seriousness of purpose. But it also raises a provocative question that lies at the heart of the new documentary "Page One: Inside the New York Times" – In a fast-paced world of color and youth, who has any use for the Gray Lady?

Andrew Rossi's film is a kind of soup-to-nuts examination of the existential pickle that the Times – and, by extension, all newspapers – finds itself in. For those who've been paying attention to the ongoing financial meltdown of the traditional news business, there is nothing here that qualifies as revelatory. Indeed, Timesologists might get impatient with the obligatory mentions of everything from plagiarist Jayson Blair to Iraq War dupe Judith Miller.

But, in the person of Times reporter David Carr, Rossi has found a fitting human symbol for the bloodied-but-unbowed stance of the Times in the Internet age. Carr, famously a former drug addict and welfare recipient, stomps through the film giv-



MAGNOLIA PICTURES

New York Times reporter David Carr emerges as the unlikely hero of 'Page One — Inside the New York Times.'

ing not an inch in the relentless speculation about the iconic newspaper's demise. He's a charismatic and proud figure, a bit eccentric but bullish on the Times's place in the media cosmos. You're left feeling that the Times exists just to give brilliant iconoclasts like Carr something to do with themselves.

Instead of trying to put its arms around the entire editorial operation of the Times, which numbers about 1,200 people, "Page One" focuses on the media desk, the department of the paper that covers the ins and out of the news media universe. This makes perfect sense, given the film's focus on whether the Times can thrive in a new media age, but it comes at the cost of showing us the immensity of the Times's editorial footprint in the country and around the world.

Shooting in 2010, the film-

makers were on hand to see the Times deal with the release of sensitive information by the website WikiLeaks, a story that is equated in its journalistic importance to the infamous Pentagon Papers story of the 1970s, in which the Times published sensitive information that deeply embarrassed the Nixon administration. At the same time, WikiLeaks is used as a convenient illustration of a new media environment in which the Times isn't the sole conduit by which such big news has to travel.

In case you're wondering, the Times itself published a decidedly negative review of the film, written by an outsider, former Time and Washington Post columnist Michael Kinsley. Kinsley's criticism of the film is that it is wildly unfocused, and it's true that it sometimes comes across as a neophyte reporter's first

FILM REVIEW

'PAGE ONE — INSIDE THE NEW YORK TIMES'

★★★

DIRECTED BY: Andrew Rossi

RATED: R for profanity and sexual references

LENGTH: 1 hour, 28 minutes

THEATERS: The Nickelodeon

big story in its efforts to cram in every detail of the last 30 years.

But at its heart, "Page One" is an absorbing debate of what the new media environment is going to look like, and a vigorous defense on the role of expensive and difficult shoe-leather reporting in that new environment.

Newspapers, especially the New York Times, often sound sanctimonious in their declarations that a free and independent media is a crucial part of a working democracy. That doesn't make them wrong. In fact, considering the still inchoate and often fragmentary forces pushing to take the old media's place at the head of the new media parade – Twitter, WikiLeaks, Facebook, etc. – that old "Gray Lady" nickname has another resonance.

In a callow news media environment of start-ups and fads, the newspaper is still the only adult in the room.

Newest 'Winnie the Pooh' as sweet as honey

By **CHRISTY LEMIRE**
Associated Press

Winnie the Pooh tends to amble unhurriedly through his days, enjoying his life and his friends in the Hundred Acre Wood at his own pace. But "Winnie the Pooh," the movie, couldn't have come along at a better time.

It is the ideal alternative to all those big, shiny, effects-laden spectacles that tend to dominate during the summer — animated or otherwise. It's

not jammed with computer-generated trickery and, mercifully, it doesn't pop out at you in 3-D.

This is just 68 minutes of pure, hunny-covered satisfaction.

Given the source material — A.A. Milne's enduring writing for children — "Winnie the Pooh" is naturally geared toward the little ones, with its cuddly characters and pleasingly soft watercolor strokes, but not at the expense of adults' enjoyment.

Quite the contrary: Grown-ups may find themselves even more engaged by it and perhaps even moved to tears.

"Winnie the Pooh" is hilariously funny, though; there's a great goofiness about it, an earnestness to the adventures of Pooh, Tigger, Piglet and pals that results in abject zaniness. Nobody here is nearly as smart or as competent as they pretend to be, but they mean well, and that makes us not just care about them but actively root for them.

FILM REVIEW

'WINNIE THE POOH'

★★★★½

DIRECTED BY: Stephen Anderson and Don Hall

RATED: G, fine for general audiences

LENGTH: 1 hour, 8 minutes

THEATERS: Santa Cruz Cinema 9, Scotts Valley Cinemas, Green Valley Cinemas