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## Working the 'Lunch' shift Cabrillo Stage set to premiere re-imagined work

By ERIK CHALHOUB  
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

**APTOS** — In order to gain access to heaven, Mackenzie Richards, a recently deceased Wall Street specialist, must answer three different prayers.

The catch? He needs to answer them all in one hour, and to make matters more difficult, he needs to do it during the lunch shift in bustling Manhattan.

That is the premise behind Cabrillo Stage's premiere of "Lunch," a work by Grammy- and Emmy-winning authors set to debut on Jan. 3.

The authors — Steve Dorff, John Bettis and Rick Hawkins — are currently at Cabrillo Stage for the rehearsal process, and will also be at the opening weekend of performances, not only to "shop the show" to New York and Hollywood producers for future productions, but also for the "Evening with the Authors" event on Jan. 4.

Sherry Hursey, who plays Carol, will be performing in her first Cabrillo Stage production, adding another star to her lengthy résumé that includes a career in television and film.

Hursey was part of the original cast of "Lunch" in 1993, which was workshopped in four cities across the nation.

The authors picked the show back up again in 2012, rewriting the entire show and music, and asked Hursey if she was available to come on board.

"I can't tell you how special it is for me to be included," she said. "I believe in this show. To be able to dive into something newly created and bring it back to life, I find that really exciting."

Known for her role as Ilene in the sitcom "Home Improvement" and as Kirsten Dunst's



Photo by Jana Marcus and RR Jones

Max Bennett-Parker stars in "Lunch" as Mackenzie Richards.

mom in the film "Bring It On," among many other productions, Hursey said her passion has always been musical theater.

In between TV shows and film, she said she would "run to New York every hiatus to support my habit of doing musicals."

"My heart's desire was to be a song and dance girl," she said.

Dorff, the composer of "Lunch," has won the NSAI Songwriter of the Year award, while also being honored with 11 Billboard #1 awards, three-time Grammy nominations and other accolades.

Lyricist Bettis has written songs for numerous artists, including Michael Jackson, George Strait, Celine Dion, Madonna, Diana Ross and Whitney Houston.

Hawkins has received seven Emmy Award nominations, five WGA Writing Award nominations as well as the Scott Newman Award twice.

"The creators of this piece really are amazing to work with

and brought a different level of professionalism to my musical theater experience," Hursey said.

"Lunch" will also feature Cabrillo Stage favorites such as Nicholas Ceglio (Groucho in "Night at the Nutcracker," "Love ... Perfect ... Change," "Scrooge"), Max Bennett-Parker ("Anything Goes," Chico in "Night at the Nutcracker," "Forever Plaid") and Ashley Little ("Hairspray," "Swing," Dorothy in "Wizard of Oz"). Andrew Ceglio directs the production while Jon Nordgren conducts the full pit orchestra.

"Lunch" is a production that will stay with the audience long after they see it, Hursey noted.

"It's filled with a lot of incredibly well-written characters and you're going to walk out of the theater singing all the songs," she said.

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"Lunch" opens Jan. 3 and runs through Jan. 19 at Ca-

brillo Crocker Theater, 6500 Soquel Drive in Aptos. Thursday through Saturday performances are at 7:30 p.m., and Sunday matinees are at 2 p.m. Admission is \$22-\$42 and tickets can be purchased at [www.cabrillostage.com](http://www.cabrillostage.com) or 479-6154.

"Evening with the Authors," a meet and greet with the authors of "Lunch," is Jan. 4 from 5:30-7 p.m. at the Cabrillo Sesnon House. Admission is \$25 and is limited to the first 160 guests. For information, visit [www.cabrillostage.com](http://www.cabrillostage.com).