

BREAKING NEWS Bay Area braces for arrival of strong storm system[Entertainment](#) > [Theater & Arts](#) • News

Creative journey leads back to downtown San Jose theater: Pizarro

Jonathan Rhys Williams to take over at Tabard Theatre Company this summer



Tabard Theatre founding Executive Artist Director Cathy Spielberger Cassetta with Jonathan Rhys Williams, who will be taking over the position in July 2020, at Tabard Theatre in San Jose on Monday, Jan. 13, 2020.

By **SAL PIZARRO** | spizarro@bayareanewsgroup.com | Bay Area News Group

PUBLISHED: January 14, 2020 at 11:35 am | UPDATED: January 14, 2020 at 1:23 pm



Jonathan Rhys Williams had a flashback moment Monday night as he stood on stage at the Tabard Theatre in San Pedro Square, the same stage where he had performed in the West Coast premiere of David Hare's "The Blue Room" 18 years earlier. This time, Williams was in an entirely new role as he was introduced as the incoming executive artistic director of Tabard Theatre Company.

"It is really quite bizarre right now because I am literally channeling back to 2002," said Williams, who grew up in San Jose and will take over the reins from Tabard's founding Executive Artistic Director **Cathy Spielberger Cassetta** this summer.

Monday night, Williams regaled an audience of Tabard Theatre patrons about his own creative journey, from his youth watching future San Jose Stage Co. founder **Randall King** performing at San Jose State (where Williams' father was a professor) to soaking in shows at San Jose Civic Light Opera and the San Jose Rep. "I watched all these organizations and I watched people bringing theater to life, and that's what inspired me and made me want to be that same kind of storyteller," he said.

After working for **Richard Orlando** at San Jose's Northside Theater Company, Williams went to CalArts in Southern California and spent a few years in Los Angeles before coming back to the Bay Area to work with San Jose Stage, TheatreWorks, ACT and American Musical Theatre San Jose. In 2002, he and **Stephanie Gularте** — his "The Blue Room" co-star — helped found Capital Stage Co. in Sacramento where he spent a decade in various roles including producing artistic director.

Ironically, Williams initially approached Cassetta about being the sound designer for Tabard's production of "The 39 Steps," opening next month. That turned into also taking on the role of production manager. And knowing his background, Cassetta asked if he'd be interested in the big job, which she announced last year she'd be stepping down from at the end of this season, Tabard's 19th.

The 20th season, themed "Celebrate Life," will be a blend of the two leaders' influences and features the musical comedy "Chaps!," the drama "Radium Girls," a return of the holiday classic, "It's a Wonderful Life," the comedy "Enchanted April," the musical "Baby" and a reworking of the classic musical "Camelot." Subscription plans are available at www.tabardtheatre.org.

Cassetta said Williams exceeds her hopes for a successor at Tabard. "Add to his education, experience, and expertise, Jonathan is a nice, kind, and thoughtful



BROADWAY SAN JOSE'S BIG SEASON: Anyone perusing the Broadway San Jose 2020-21 season lineup would be justifiably excited by the prospect of "Dear Evan Hansen" coming to the Center for the Performing Arts in November or the return of the epic crowdpleaser "The Lion King" for a monthlong run starting July 15. Me? I'm surprisingly most excited by getting the pre-Broadway run of "1776," a revival of the 1969 musical about the writing and signing of the Declaration of Independence directed by Tony Award-winner **Diane Paulus**.

It should be interesting how "1776" — running Sept. 29-Oct. 4 — is staged in a post-“Hamilton” world, especially since there’s no indication that Lin-Manuel Miranda’s hit musical will be coming to San Jose anytime soon. Get more details on the season at broadwaysanjose.com.

LEGO COMPETITION SHORTENED: One consequence of the 49ers’ hosting the NFC Championship Game on Sunday at Levi’s Stadium is that [the two-day Brick Factor competition at the Great Mall in Milpitas](#) has been cut down to Saturday only. The contest to find the new Master Model Builder for the Legoland Discovery Center Bay Area will start at 10 a.m. and the finals will get going around 4 p.m. It’s still free and open to the public, and as a nod to the NFL game a Lego version of a 49ers helmet is expected to be on display.

BREAKING INTO THE TOP 25: I’m as big a San Jose booster as you’ll find, but even I was surprised to see the city No. 25 on [the list of the world’s best 100 cities](#), ranked by Resonance Consultancy, a tourism, real estate and economic development advisory group. Our perpetual City on the Verge got high marks for “talent, smarts and money,” and pulled in just behind Las Vegas and Miami. San Francisco ranked 11th and third behind New York and L.A. among U.S. cities in the ranking.

[Report an error](#)

[Policies and Standards](#)

[Contact Us](#)



The Trust Project



SPONSORED CONTENT

See How This Self-Taught IT Pro Makes an Impact at His Small



and often help neighbors when they encounter problems."

Tags: [Around Town](#), [News Columnists](#), [Theater](#)

Sal Pizarro Sal Pizarro has written the Around Town column for The Mercury News since 2005. His column covers the people and events surrounding the cultural scene in Silicon Valley. In addition, he writes Cocktail Chronicles, a feature column on Silicon Valley bars and nightclubs.

 Follow Sal Pizarro @spizarro

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!
ALL ACCESS DIGITAL OFFER FOR JUST 99 CENTS!

