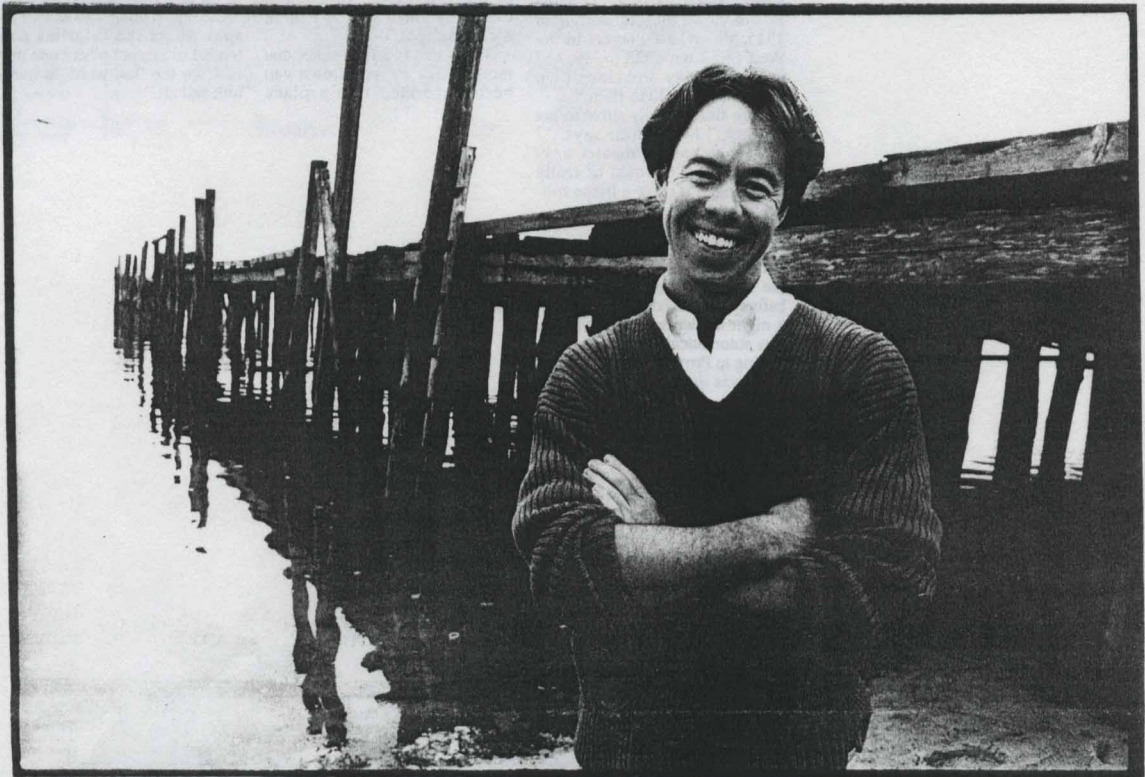


WHAT'S ON CAPE

A R T S • E N T E R T A I N M E N T • C U L T U R E



Ken Hoyt, who hopes to bring professional theater back to the tip of the Cape with his Provincetown Repertory Theatre, stands before the remains of the town's last professional theater, the Provincetown Playhouse on the Wharf, which burned down in 1977.

Staff Photo by Matthew Cavanaugh

Building on Past Glory

Professional Company, Flurry of Activity May Signal the Rebirth of Provincetown Theater

By Laura Collins-Hughes

After all these years, the ghosts of Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams still haunt Provincetown.

It's been more than 70 years since O'Neill boarded up his house in the dunes and went away for good. Williams, once a fixture of the local arts scene, is long gone. Gone, too, is the Provincetown Playhouse on the Wharf, the town's last theater, which burned down in 1977. But talk of the glorious theatrical past of this artists' colony — where O'Neill's "Bound East for Cardiff" was first produced in 1916 in a converted fish shack, and where Williams spent summer days toiling away on his first major play, "The Glass Menagerie," in 1945 — continues.

What makes the talk different right now is that it's accompanied by action, most notably the efforts of actor Ken Hoyt to found the Provincetown Repertory Theatre, the town's first resident professional company since the demise of the playhouse.

"There are people here who love theater, really love it, but it can't be called a theater town when the playhouse burned down in 1977 and there's been no functioning theater since," says Mr. Hoyt, a baby-faced 30-year-old who left Los Angeles and the world of sitcoms, commercials and soap operas a year ago for what he hopes will be greater artistic fulfillment here.

To this relative newcomer, the town's lack of theater is striking.

"I think there's a really fascinating history now of non-theater," he says. "As much as you hear about what there was, you hear about 'Oh, shouldn't there be one?' ... The fact that there's nothing here now is almost as powerful as the fact that once it was such an incredible theater town."

Similar lamentations have grown louder in the past couple of years as the Provincetown Theatre Company, a

community group now in its 32nd season, has found itself homeless, storing its possessions in a trailer and mounting productions where and when it can. But suddenly, momentum seems to be gathering to change the situation.

This summer will see an abundance of theater in town, from the Provincetown Rep's inaugural program of eight 10-minute plays by Joseph Pintauro, to be staged at town hall during the last two weeks of July, to a production of "Nonsense" slated to go up at the Gifford House. Conn

extinct," says Mr. Ünel, "but it would be nice not to be a town just for people to buy T-shirts and ice cream."

Indeed, the playwright evoked the past in his company's mission statement, which talks about a town "so rich with theatrical history."

"Our vision," it states, "is to reclaim Provincetown's rich tradition of being a center for theater, where people make that special trip to see original works and quality performances."

Mr. Hoyt used nearly identical language on the invitation to Provincetown Rep's June 3 gala fundraiser, speaking of "our town's magnificent theatrical history."

"It's true that Provincetown has such a history of theater," Mr. Ünel explains, "and I think that people who are trying to start something now are trying to bank on that. It's part of the identity of the town."

So much so that Adele Heller, the owner of the Provincetown Playhouse on the Wharf, still gets telephone calls from people wondering what the Provincetown Players are going to stage this season — 18 years after the playhouse burned down.

"It is a landmark as much as anything," says Ms. Heller, who with her husband, Lester, acquired the 33-year-old theater in 1973. "The fishing is going down ... but the place is connected to theater and art."

The destruction of the theater "left a large void," she says, reminiscing about the Actors' Equity productions staged there and the apprentices who came from all over the country to learn there. Now the only physical remnants of the theater are the decrepit wharf and the former ticket office on Gosnold Street, where Ms. Heller's daughter runs the Julie Heller Gallery. Virtually the only creative remnant of the theater is the Provincetown

"The fact that there's nothing here now is almost as powerful as the fact that once it was such an incredible theater town."

— Ken Hoyt

Artist Performance Events, which staged a single one-woman show two nights a week last summer at the Provincetown Inn, will come back for its second season with an expanded repertoire of four plays and various children's entertainment in a seven-nights-a-week schedule. Local playwright Sinan Ünel, whose latest work, "A Mad Person's Chronicle of a Miserable Marriage," ended a run last weekend at the Gifford House, has formed a company called the Outermost Performance Group. And the Universalist Meeting House is getting into the act with "Big Wind on Campus," a one-man show that opens this weekend and is scheduled to run into September.

No one seems quite certain why the upsurge has come now, but there is a common desire to recapture Provincetown's identity as a theater town.

"Granted, we have a fishing industry that's almost

(Continued on Page 25)

Provincetown Theater

(Continued From Page 21)

Playhouse Muse Series of concerts, held each summer.

Ms. Heller, whose 1978 contest to design a new playhouse featured a panel of judges headed by I.M. Pei, was unable to rebuild the theater for financial reasons. Now, she says, she wishes she'd been less ambitious and more traditional — traditional, that is, in the sense of the long line of local companies that used wharf shacks as theaters: the original Provincetown Players, starting in 1915; the Wharf Players in the West End from 1923 to '39; and the latter-day Provincetown Players from 1940 to 1976.

"We should really strive to get a shack," Ms. Heller says. "I think you can do theater anywhere. I think it would be really appropriate. It's like a living tribute instead of a monument."

Actress Marjorie Conn, founder of Conn Artist Performance Events, remembers the late 1960s and early 1970s, before she moved to town, when a night or two at the playhouse was automatically a part of vacationing in Provincetown.

"It was something that you just did," she recalls. "I would come here for five days ... and definitely go to a play. It was part of the reason for coming."

It's that draw that Mr. Hoyt is seeking to recreate with Provincetown Rep, which he envisions as a company employing actors from New York and Los Angeles. The presence of a professional company would, he says, make Provincetown truly an artists' community.

"It's largely known as an artists' community, and there's this whole section of artists completely left out in the cold," he says. "To label it an artists' community and then not have a single

theater here is ridiculous."

Some local theater people are privately hostile to Mr. Hoyt's efforts, feeling they're being shoved out of the way by someone who thinks they're not good enough. But more of them seem enthusiastic, glad to see someone taking action they've long thought should be taken.

"I'm all for as many theater companies in town as possible," says Stuard Derrick, a member of the Provincetown Theatre Company since 1990. "I think it's a great idea."

There also is a firm belief that modern-day Provincetown can be transformed into a place

where theater matters once again.

"I think it's going to happen," Mr. Ünel says. "I think a lot of people are thinking along those lines right now. I like what the Provincetown Repertory Theatre is doing. You just need somebody like that who has the energy and the time and the devotion to do it. And that's not me."

If so, what the Boston Post wrote in 1916 might be as true in the future as it was in the past: "And thus it comes about that the spot where the Pilgrims first landed is the spot where one may look for the 'last word' in literature and art."

Theater company debuts

By K.C. MYERS
STAFF WRITER

PROVINCETOWN — Provincetown Repertory Theatre Inc. was scheduled to make its seasonal debut at town hall last night with a production of "For Heavens Sake: an evening of short plays by Joe Pintauro."

The company's founder, Kenneth Hoyt, a 31-year-old actor from New York and Los Angeles, hopes the two-week run in the 200-seat auditorium will be enough to launch a new resident company that will eventually have its own playhouse in Provincetown.

Hoyt plans to use professional, seasoned actors imported from Los Angeles and New York City and eventually raise enough money to build or buy a playhouse.

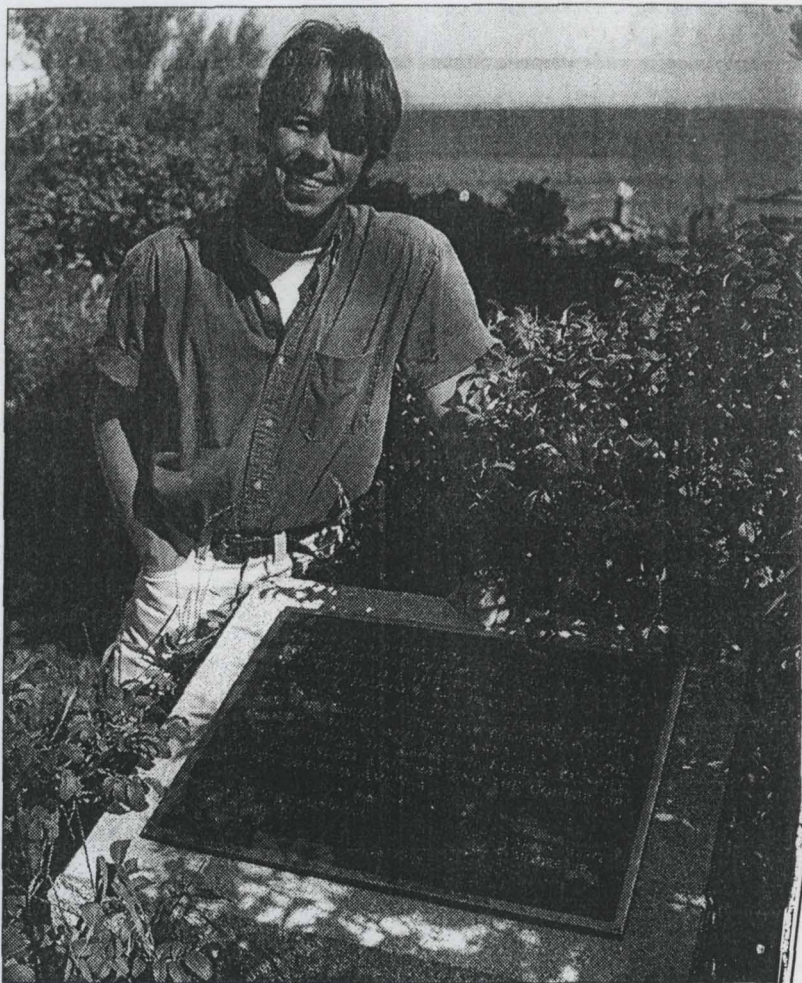
"You have to attract people who have had their butts in acting class for years and years and years," he said.

To pay the five actors in the Pintauro plays, Hoyt has taken out a \$30,000 business loan. He needs to sell 140 seats each night to break even, he said. Then he is going to spend the winter writing grant applications. He hopes to stage three plays next season. He is scared, but hopeful, he said.

Raised in Greenwich, Conn., Hoyt said acting was the only thing he ever cared about. Since he was 14 he pestered his mother to drive him to auditions in the Connecticut suburbs and later to New York City.

After attending New York University, Hoyt obtained an Actors' Equity Association card and shuttled from Hollywood to New York City until 1991, when he moved to Provincetown. For the decade prior he was given bit parts in sitcoms and commercials. One half-minute appearance on television would pay \$4,000.

"I would really like to do the deodorant commercials and the cheesy sitcoms in the winter, and then come here to do theater," he said.



Times Photo by VINCENT GUADAZZI

■ Ken Hoyt stands beside a plaque marking the site of the old Provincetown Players theater.

"For Heaven's Sake" features nine plays by contemporary New York playwright Joe Pintauro. They are both serious and humorous and address AIDS and other gay-related issues.

The show is running at 8 p.m. through July 30 (with no show July 24) at Provincetown Town Hall.

Tickets, \$15, may be reserved by calling Provincetown Reservations System at 487-6400.

Cape Cod Times

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Writing strong in Pintauro plays

"FOR HEAVENS SAKE: AN EVENING OF SHORT PLAYS BY JOE PINTAURO," directed by Jerry O'Donnell; produced by the Provincetown Repertory Theatre; 8 p.m. Tuesdays through Sundays through July 30; at Provincetown Town Hall; tickets: \$15; reservations: 487-6400.

By **K.C. MYERS**
STAFF WRITER

PROVINCETOWN — Provincetown Repertory Theatre's first offering, "For Heavens Sake," featuring nine short plays by contemporary New York City playwright Joe Pintauro, is well-written and gracefully executed.

Director Jerry O'Donnell does a good job with a risky format: a series of short vignettes dealing with themes of religion, relationships and death. The actors are able to leap into their roles, keeping emotion high despite breaks between

REVIEW

A sound system provides the appropriate opera, classical or religious music, depending on the upcoming scene, makes the breaks painless. However, the sound could be adjusted so that the actors' voices do not get lost in the large town-hall auditorium.

The little plays present quirky situations, such as a gay man who goes into a big declaration of love on the wrong person's answering machine. They gain power as the evening progresses. "Rosen's Son," the second-to-last vignette, contains a masterful performance by Richard Mover as a grieving Jewish father whose histrionics ruin a dinner party at his dead son's ex-lover's apartment.

The final scene is truly striking. A Cuban dancer, played by a capti-

vating Kim McGreal, shows up as a gay hairdresser is about to commit suicide. When he does, she is transformed into the Madonna, and the hairdresser the figure of Jesus, lying dead in his mother's arms, creating their own version of Michelangelo's "Pieta."

Today in

■ Reviews of "Under Siege II: Dark Territory" and the Harbor Watch Room restaurant in Harwich Port.

■ A story about Napi van Der-eck's collection of Provincetown art.

■ A preview of the Barnstable County Fair.

Giving Voice

Curtain Rises on Professional Theater in Provincetown

By Laura Collins-Hughes

A lot of people launching a summer theater would have picked a popular moneymaker for their first production. Not Ken Hoyt.

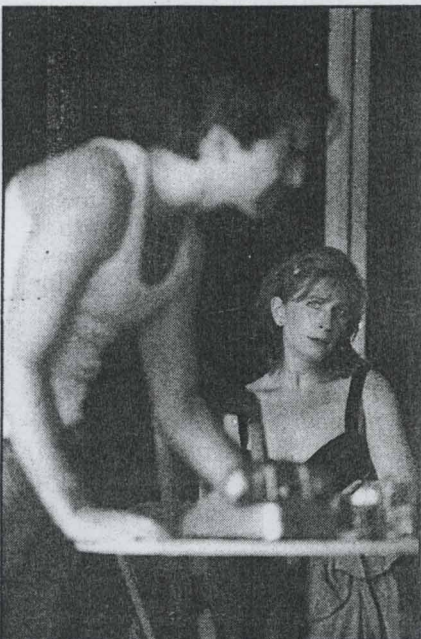
Mr. Hoyt, whose dream of founding a professional, resident theater in Provincetown comes to fruition tonight when the curtain goes up at town hall, chose instead "For Heavens Sake," a series of nine short plays hand-picked from Joseph Pintauro's "Rapid Fire," a cycle of 30 short plays.

"It was an unusual choice," concedes the 31-year-old founder of Provincetown Repertory Theatre, who is also a member of the production's cast of four men and two women. "Even my



Ken Hoyt, founder of the Provincetown Repertory Theatre, is part of the cast of its first production, opening tonight.

Staff Photos by Matthew Cavanaugh



Tom MacMaster and Kimberly McGreal rehearse one of the nine plays that make up "For Heavens Sake."

mother said, 'Why didn't you choose something everyone knows?'"

Instead, he chose a production that's never been seen in Provincetown, but one that he believes fits in with the town in both sensibility and subject matter, including AIDS, gay, death and religious or higher-power themes. Although "Rapid Fire" originally was performed over three nights at the Circle Rep Lab in New York City in the mid-1980s, Mr. Hoyt says the plays he chose from it speak in Provincetown's voice, something he believes is missing from the local theater scene.

"Provincetown's voice is so unique," he says. "You see it in painting. You hear about it in prose. You hear songs about it, but there is no theater that is expressing

what Provincetown is about."

Mr. Hoyt, who has lived in Provincetown full time for more than a year and part time since 1991, is the only local member of a cast otherwise made up of actors from New York and Los Angeles. His relatively short residency in town, his use of professionals who aren't locals and his comments about the need for a theater building in Provincetown — which have been misconstrued by some as criticisms of the quality of local productions — have rubbed some established local theater people the wrong way. It is a reaction that frustrates and puzzles Mr. Hoyt.

"There's a place for everything," he says, "and [the addition of Provincetown Rep] only makes it more of a theater town."

He would like to see that growth continue, especially with the addition of plays written locally.

"To me, that this place doesn't have a theater and isn't producing works that stem out of this place is awful," he says. "It's wasted art. ... In this tiny little town there are amazing stories, and they're just disappearing without being expressed in any sort of theatrical sense."

For now, he will take from the outside, but he believes the raw material for great plays exists in the diverse population of his town.

"I think it's all here," he says. "What it is to be human is here in Provincetown."

"For Heavens Sake" runs at 8 p.m. Tuesdays through Sundays

◆ THEATER REVIEW ◆

"For Heaven's Sake" is divine

By Alan W. Petrucelli

Sex. Suicide. Death. Disaster. Religion. Pretty heavy stuff for a hot summer night at the theater — definitely not the escapism one might expect a new repertory theater to present as its inaugural offering.

Yet those are the exact topics the Provincetown Repertory Theatre tackles in "For Heaven's Sake," a series of nine one-act plays by playwright Joe Pintauro.

Give Ken Hoyt a hand. Though not everything about the work is miraculous, Hoyt — actor, director and now founder and artistic director of the PRT — takes a big risk ... and succeeds. "For Heaven's Sake" is what theater in Provincetown should be: commanding, original, well-acted and superbly directed by Jerry O'Donnell.

The evening gets off to an electrifying start with "Watchman of the Night." A gay man declares his innermost thoughts, his love and lust, on the answering machine of his new lover—or so he thinks. He actually has reached a wrong number and is speaking to the machine of Mike, a straight man who, sitting in his darkened apartment after leaving his whiny girlfriend, is nursing a beer and the same fears and frustrations of the gentleman caller. The acting is superb, especially that of O'Donnell as the exasperated Mike.

In "Birds in Church," two nuns are on the run — with collection basket, flashlight and Jack Daniels in hand — as they try and capture a pair of birds on the loose. Their dreams of catching what they think might be a gift from God (true Birds of Paradise, perhaps?) are crushed when they discover that the birds — budgies named ChiChi and Bluebelle — have been orphaned by their owner. No "Nonsense" here, just tight writing, terrific acting (kudos to Alison Crowley and Kim McGreal), taut direction and a line that will leave you in hysterics. (To give it away would be a sin. Suffice it to say it's about God and his boyfriend.)

The first act's oddest work is

"Rex." The dinner table is set, and dimwitted yuppie Jenn announces to her sensible yuppie husband, "We must eat flesh tonight." It seems that on the way home from checking on their home in East Hampton, Jenn — deliciously portrayed by Crowley — ran over a pheasant with her Mercedes. The vet couldn't save it

("It died in his hands!" she wails, so she serves it up ... to her vegetarian husband. Ken Hoyt's take after his first "taste" is priceless.

Equally odd, but just as compelling, is "Rules of Love," the opening vignette of Act Two. Here, we become voyeurs as a young man confesses his love affair with a priest, to a priest — his lover. Pintauro superbly melds the heartfelt and the hypocrisy, and once again, O'Donnell's talents shine.

The best work, however, is the

penultimate "Rosen's Son." A Jewish man has come to the home of his dead son's lover on the night the young man and his new lover are throwing a party. The old man is angry and hurt that his son's partner has found a new love. The acting is top-notch; the tears are guaranteed to flow. Richard Mover brings Rosen's pain close to unbearable levels; a welcome performance since Mover was close to lifeless in Act One's "Frozen Dog."

The actors must be given credit for being able to effortlessly jump into various roles; not an easy feat when you are working in a space like Town Hall where the sound, lighting and stifling heat work against you.

"For Heaven's Sake" is (cliché be damned!) a slice of heaven, proving that good theater — thinking person's theater — can work in Provincetown. It just takes talent.

"Search" shows unclear vision

By Winter Miller

"The Search for Intelligent Signs of Life in the Universe" focuses on the revelations of a bag lady named Trudy and her active imagination.

Trudy interacts with "space chums" and the people whose lives she accidentally channels into through her extraterrestrial friends. Decked out in polyester, green tights, mismatched socks, a jacket with Post-it notes and an umbrella hat, Trudy contentedly admits to being crazy. And she faces such

challenges as explaining to her alien acquaintances the difference between soup and art — that is, a can of Campbell's soup versus an Andy Warhol rendition of a can of Campbell's soup. In between, she also has to deal with life on Earth.

Bobby Rosser, who plays Trudy, does a fine job with the delivery of her character's unintentional witticisms. But while this play is normally performed by one woman, this production takes a different tack and suffers from the lack of connection between actors and characters.

Trudy introduces the audience

to Chrissy, a fitness fanatic and wannabe career woman who laments over her lack of ambition and inability to hold onto a job. P.J. McKey's Chrissy is well aerobicized, but one-dimensional. Playing both male and female roles, Marjorie Conn struggles. For example, her depiction of Paul, a fitness-conscious cokehead, is unsuccessful in its attempt to provide the atmosphere of a gym, the act of weightlifting, and locker room banter.

While all three actors clearly have something to offer, the production blatantly illuminates the need for a clear directorial vision. The actors fluctuate mid-sentence from seemingly speaking to an invisible

character to a dialogue with the audience. The illusion of being in a kitchen, at a shrink's office, or in a bar, is frequently disrupted by disjointed glances into the audience or away from other actors. At times the actors wander around the set, speaking lines that are disconnected from their actions and emotions. Rather than well-developed characterizations, they offer stereotypical Jewish grandmothers, stuck-up Brits, and Roseanne Roseannadanna clones.

Admittedly, these women were following in the footsteps of the legendary Lily Tomlin, an act that is nearly impossible to follow. But by presenting only portions of the

continued on next page

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

Repertory company takes theater seriously

By Joe Burns
BANNER STAFF

With one eye on the future and the other on the past, Ken Hoyt hopes to see a resurrection of Provincetown's theatrical tradition.

"You hear the trolley go by and you hear, 'This is where Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Susan Glaspell lived,' and (now) there's nothing," says Hoyt, artistic director for the Provincetown Repertory Theater. "I think it's the only thing missing in town, it's a glaring omission from the town's artistic community."

Hoyt hopes to take the first steps toward rectifying that omission when the PRT, a nonprofit, Actors Equity group, makes its debut performance at 8 p.m. July 18 at Provincetown Town Hall, when it presents "For Heavens Sake: an evening of short plays by Joe Pintauro." Hoyt describes the production as nine short plays selected from a cycle of plays called "Rapid Fire," written and produced by Pintauro in the mid-'80s.

"They're little gems. Some of them are three pages long," says Hoyt, estimating total performance time as less than two hours.

The plays are being directed by Jerry O'Donnell, and cast includes Alison Crowley, Kim McGreal, Richard Mover, Tom Macmaster and Hoyt himself.

Originally from Greenwich, Conn., Hoyt has spent eight years working the sitcom, soaps and commercial circuit in New York and L.A. After spending several summers here, he became a full-time resident last year. It was then that his dream began to take form. Seeing a building in town that he thought would make an excellent theater,

Hoyt spent the fall and winter building an organization and laying down a solid foundation for a permanent theater and resident company.

"I think (other) people have tried. It's a full-time job and I don't think there were a lot of people in Provincetown who were able or willing to make it full-time work. They have whole lives," he says. "Maybe that's in I have no life. I'm single. I have no commitments to family, to relationships."

Hoyt has also put his money along with funds from a number of investors and contributors into the cause. Right now a \$30,000 business loan and an additional \$20,000 in donations and private investments are riding on the success of "For Heavens Sake."

"Up until this play we're a lot of impressive paper work. The play's the thing," says Hoyt, betting that there's room for the meaty fare in a town where light theater and cabaret have been the staples.

"I'm scared of that, that maybe some people won't know the difference. I think, there's a history now of non-theater in this and it's just as powerful as Mr. O'Neill's reputation or the fact that Tennessee Williams wrote plays above the A-House. The Provincetown Players were really in existence for two years. We've gone without a theater now for 20 years. That is a hell of a lot longer than that

brief shining and infamous two years and that's going to be a hard nut to crack," Hoyt says.

"I love going to see the shows in the cabarets but there's more and I'm terribly afraid that people don't know what they've been missing."

Should the show succeed Hoyt is preparing for a fall production and further steps towards solidifying theater in Provincetown.

Hoyt says that he's talked with

"It would be really nice to be able to go back to Los Angeles in October audition for the deodorant commercials, and the cheesy sit-coms and the bad horror movies knowing that you have the summer to come back and do your plays."

Ken Hoyt, artistic director of the Provincetown Repertory Theater.

Photo illustration courtesy of Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum

Fine Arts Work Center director Fred Leebron about the center's playwright workshop, which will begin in the fall, and says he would like to be in a position to put on a production that grew out of that program. He also sees the PRT as a creative retreat for New York and L.A. actors.

"A lot of actors are unfulfilled,"

Hoyt says. "It would be really nice to be able to go back to Los Angeles in October audition for the deodorant commercials, and the cheesy sitcoms and the bad horror movies knowing that you have the summer to come back and do your plays."