



Dennis' Fred Inkley finds a creepy new 'Family' on Broadway

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Fred Inkley

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Cape Coddler

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CAPE COD — The mysterious and spooky, but perhaps not altogether ooky, Addams Family first burst onto the scene in the 1930s in a series of sketches and drawings by cartoonist Charles Addams in "The New Yorker." Since then, the twisted yet charming Gomez, Morticia, Uncle Fester, Wednesday, Pugsly, Grandma, and Lurch have appeared in a classic 1960s sitcom, two feature films, and now a Broadway musical, which opened earlier this month at New York's Lunt-Fontanne Theatre

Setting the macabre to music is a good move, according to West Dennis native Fred Inkley, who appears in the new musical as one of the Addams' ancestors.

"The characters are already well known and well liked. And the story Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice have written for them here works very well because it has wonderful comedy, but also some very engaging drama, too. What I remember from the very first night of rehearsals, however, was that I went home humming the music which was a good sign that our audiences would leave smiling and humming the tunes, too, and that our composer, Andrew Lipka, had done a good job," said Inkley by telephone from his home in Cedar Grove, N.J.

Starring two-time Tony Award winners Nathan Lane and Bebe Neuwirth, "The Addams Family" musical features an original story about something parents, at least those like Gomez and Morticia Addams, dread. Their little girl, Wednesday Addams, is fast becoming a woman and, making things even worse, she's falling head over heels for a well-mannered young man from a very proper family.

"The Addams ancestors are there to assist Uncle Fester in moving Wednesday's love affair along and to do some singing and dancing along the way, too. We weren't given very much backstory on the ancestors, but at one rehearsal Bebe gave us each names. Bebe named me Preston Addams, and then I added Ascot in the middle just to dress it up a bit more. I imagine my character as a former World War I doughboy. And since I relate more to Lurch, I'm probably his father."

Growing up on Cape Cod

Inkley, who in addition to playing an Addams ancestor, is understudy for the characters of Lurch and Mal Beinecke, got his start in 1965 when he was born at Cape Cod Hospital in Hyannis to parents Fred and Janet Inkley.

"When I was born, my mother was a nurse at Cape Cod Hospital and later she became my school nurse at Ezra Baker elementary school in West Dennis." It was as a child that Inkley, along with older brothers Kevin, who now lives in Warwick, R.I., and Brad, who makes his home in Yarmouth, first discovered theater.

"As kids, we always did the plays with John and Betty Kelly at Allegra Academy in Orleans. They taught us a great deal about voice and dance," says Inkley, a 1983 graduate of Dennis-Yarmouth Regional High School who was the first musical theater major to graduate from Catawba College in Salisbury, N.C.

A college production of "Hair" brought Inkley together with his future wife, Tori. Now married 22 years, the couple has a son, Zack, 18, and two daughters, Kiersten, 15, and six-year-old Madison.

While raising his family, Inkley has also been chocking up impressive theater credits, including a starring role in the long-running first national tour of "Beauty and the Beast" and two stints on Broadway as Jean Valjean in "Les Miserables." Living in New Jersey and working in New York hasn't, however, curtailed his Cape connections.

Will sing national anthem

"I've sung the national anthem for the past four years at the annual 'Pops by the Sea' concerts on Hyannis Village Green. Those appearances have given me the opportunity not only to sing with Keith Lockhart and the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra, but also to meet and work with guest conductors like William Shatner, Ray Romano, Henry Winkler, and Angie Dickinson. I'm planning to be there again on August 1, although I don't know yet who they'll have as celebrity guest conductor this year. I'm also planning to sing with the Cape Symphony at Barnstable High School for their holiday concerts in December."

Even with "The Addams Family" playing to packed houses on Broadway, Inkley's mind still sometimes drifts to summers on the Cape.

"My father passed away a few years ago, but my mother still lives in the house my brothers and I grew up in, so we're back there often. I love taking my kids to West Dennis Beach and to other places we really like including the Red Cottage Restaurant on Old Bass River Road in South Dennis. They do a really great breakfast there. The owner and chef, Dan Rosenbach, is an old high school friend. He's been down to see "The Addams Family." Dan transformed the Red Cottage from a convenience store to a neat little breakfast spot. Dan's a nice, nice guy and a really good egg — no pun intended."

"The Addams Family" is at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre, 205 West 46th Street, New York. For tickets and information, call 877-250-2929 or go online at theaddamsfamilymusical.com

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