

Interview: Jamie Wollrab Smoothly Multi-Tasks BROTHERS PLAY With His Many Other Projects

broadwayworld.com/los-angeles/article/Interview-Jamie-Wollrab-Smoothly-Multi-Tasks-BROTHERS-PLAY-With-His-Many-Other-Projects-20230105

by Gil Kaan

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Breaking With Tradition Productions' latest production Brothers Play by Matthew Doherty will open January 14, 2023, at Legacy LA (with one preview January 13th). James Eckhouse directs the cast of Rob Nagle, Jeffrey Nordling and Jamie Wollrab. I had the opportunity to get some insight into Brothers Play from Jamie, as well as some of the many activities he has juggling in the air.

Thank you for taking the time for this interview, Jamie!

This isn't the first time you've worked with James Eckhouse. He co-directed you in your solo spin in *Nocturne* in 2017. What aspects of both of your personalities encouraged you to work together again?

I am always happy to sing Mr. Eckhouse's praises, so here goes. There was a kemsit aspect to *Nocturne* in 2017. We met through IAMA and we both had Illinois roots where parts of *Nocturne* took place. I love the way he understands story, actors, and space. It's rare when you work with a director, and you trust the edges they are nudging you in and to be able to ask them to trust your process as well. They will converge when you have a director like James. Matt Doherty had approached me for *Brothers Play* in 2020. It also took place in Chicago and there was an elemental connection I felt he would have. So I connected them. They got on like gangbusters. So here we are!

Have you developed a shorthand in communication?

I touched on this a bit in the earlier question. It's not just a shorthand. It's trust. As the piece will always be different so we have to discover a new way of attacking it. I think we share boundless enthusiasm. So the best idea usually wins. Very little ego with James and he's



brilliant. Such a rare combination. I think the most important thing is that the ideas become tangible, playable. That's why it's so much fun, which is so important with a play like this which has such a dark subject matter.

Have you worked with any of the other *Brothers Play* cast and creatives before?

This is my first with Jeffrey, Rob, and Matt. They were all with the play far before I arrived via The Actors Studio and Antaeus. Designers Veronica (sound) and Justin (set and lights) are dear friends and two of my favorite designers. Our assistant director Sarah Newman is an old friend. It is just such a joy to see so many friends old and new coming together for one vision.



What would your three-line pitch for this play be?

Three brothers reunite for a traditionally unwieldy Christmas. One brother has awakened to a secret that could break his family. How will they all respond to the truth being revealed, with love or destruction?

You play Thomas, the youngest of the three brothers. How would you describe Thomas' relationship with his older brothers? Contentious? Competitive? Distant? Idolizing?

I think this is what makes this play so good. It's all of the above. And often within seconds of each other. It's loving, volatile, confusing, and addictive. You can't help but resort to your deepest childhood response. It's like they know each other's buttons and they can't help but push all of them.

If you were to submit Thomas on a dating site, what qualities of his would you list?

Send help! Hahaha!

What character flaws of his would you definitely omit?

Lack of boundaries. He really doesn't know where he ends, and others begin. His sensitivity is his greatest gift and his curse.

Have you mastered the juggling of being a member of IAMA Theatre Company, being the artistic director of The Triptych Theatre Group, your own life and career coaching business Jamie Wollrab Studios you started in 2002, and accepting other gigs?

I love this question and I don't get to talk about it much. I kept my own creativity separate from my coaching until recently. Because coaching is about service and focus on supporting others - so it's been an interesting balance with my own acting career. I truly love doing both. I now have my coaching and production company under one umbrella. It happened organically.

What gives you greater gratification - audience applause for your own acting talents? A standing ovation for your directed cast? Seeing a light bulb moment from one of your students?

I think the greatest feeling is true transformation. Whatever form that takes. Whatever vantage I am in while that happens. It's the artist's job to bring darkness to light. I love being in an ensemble. So the transmission is what lights me up. Being a part of something special is the main thing. And I get to do that for fun *and* for a living. How lucky is that?



What's in the near future for Jamie Wollrab?

I am currently running a men's group, Artist Way Group, and will be launching an e-course called *The Empowered Voice* in 2023. All around public speaking of the actor artist. We've already shot it. I also teach an acting class at The Pico called Somatic Scene Study. I will be producing my first feature in 2023 called *Synthetic* directed by Oliver Ridge. Don't know how this will also gel. But it does somehow! I also have a wonderful family and a three-year-old son Jones that is the light of my life. Being a good dad is also a top priority always.

Thank you again, Jamie! I look forward to seeing your *Brothers Play*.

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From This Author - [Gil Kaan](#)

Gil Kaan, a former Managing Editor of the now-defunct Genre magazine, has had the privilege of photographing and interviewing some major divas of film, television, and stage in... ([read more about this author](#))

