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- SUNDAY: 10:00am-5:00pm

NEWS & VIEWS

Montreal's "Gypsy" plays key role in Tony Award winning Pippin



Mike Cohen

NEW YORK- To say that **Gypsy Snider** has played a pivotal role in the Tony Award winning Broadway musical *Pippin* (www.pippinthemusical.com) is indeed an understatement. When we spoke, she beamed with pride as she recounted the role she successfully undertook to revive this production with a circus flair.

Pippin, playing at the Music Box Theatre, was the winner of four Tony Awards, including Best Revival of a Musical, Best Actress in a Musical and Best Direction of a Musical. The storyline revolves around a travelling troupe of Players putting on a show about the son of Charlemagne, *Pippin*, and the perils of his pursuit of happiness. The Players are a circus troupe thanks to Snider, whose *Les 7 doigts de la main* are pioneers of circus on a human scale. She was actually personally recruited by lead producer **Barry Weissler** three and half years ago, brought down to New York and along with director **Diane Paulus** began to rewrite *Pippin* from scratch.

"We reimagined it," Snider told me. "It was originally about a travelling theatre troupe. We made it into a travelling circus."

Pippin marks Snider's Broadway debut. Her career as a performer actually began at age four in San Francisco as part of her parents' Pickle Family Circus, for which she toured internationally. "That is where the name Gypsy came from," she said.

Snider discovered Montreal when she joined the *Cirque du Soleil*. There she met her now ex-husband **Patrick Leonard**. The two remain close friends, parents to two young girls and partners in *Les 7 doigts de la main*, responsible for the hit show *Traces* among others.

The circus had always been Snider's life, but everything turned upside-down in January 2008 when she was diagnosed with advanced stage colon cancer. She

needed massive abdominal surgery and rounds of chemotherapy and radiation. "Suddenly, my work felt trivial and my family became more important than ever before," she remarked. "I began to question how taxing show business can be and wondered if I should just move to the country and raise my two daughters in a stress-free environment. It was during this difficult time that Paulus reached out to me about the possibility of collaborating on a new production of *Pippin*."

Snider's cancer officially went into remission during tech rehearsals of *Pippin* in Cambridge, Massachusetts. "With *Pippin*, I was in love," she said. "I hired some of the best acrobats in the world, who are not only excellent at what they do, but are incredibly expressive and theatrical and passionate people onstage."

Snider returns to New York monthly to see the show and work on changes to choreography. A fall national tour is being planned. It will begin in her hometown of San Francisco. "I have not seen any confirmed Canadian dates," she says. "It has been promised to me that it will come to Canada one day."

You can read my detailed feature on Snider in the latest edition of *The Suburban Magazine* at thesuburban.com. Just click on the icon at the bottom of the right side.

COHEN CHATTER: Noted broadcaster and producer **Kenny Bodanis** is quickly becoming one of this city's true gurus on parenting via his website *mengetpregnanttoo.com*. Now his hard cover book of the same name is available in bookstores. See my column on him at thesuburban.com in our West Island edition...**Wayne Bews** has settled in as general manager of *The Beat 92.5 FM*. Can **Ted Bird** be far behind? See my blog...**Jordan Tietolman**, son of radio industry veteran Paul, has launched a new record label. See page 48 of *The Suburban Magazine*.

Have you got something to share? Email mcohen@thesuburban.com or call 514-484-9203, ext. 307. Follow me on Twitter @mikecohencl and on my blog at <http://blog.thesuburban.com>

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