

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Local Playwright Announces Premiere of New Drama,  
*RIDING THE COMET***

Mark Violi  
620 Paxson Ave  
Hamilton, NJ 08619

August 2, 2011

**HAMILTON, NJ** – Local playwright, Mark Violi announces the world premiere production of his gripping drama, ***Riding the Comet***, to be performed at the Heritage Center in Morrisville, PA for a three weekend run beginning Friday, September 16, 2011.

Produced by the Actors' NET of Bucks County, ***Riding the Comet*** launches the stage company's sixteenth season. It was well received as a staged reading held at The NET in May 2009. Violi, a Hamilton, NJ resident, then reworked his script and it was accepted to be mounted as a full production.

The WWII-era drama centers on a farming family living in German-Occupied France just days following D-Day. The family is part of the "Comet Escape Line," a secret underground railroad designed to help wayward Allied soldiers get back to London. When the family harbors two American GIs, a plan is set in motion to return them safely to England. As the family endures the horrors of war, the eldest daughter, Linette, and her nine-year-old sister, Andie, become key players in the dangerous mission.

Violi notes that the Comet Escape Line did actually exist. It was begun in 1940 by a young Belgium woman. By war's end, British Intelligence estimated the Comet Line aided over 5,000 Allied soldiers.

"When asked what the play is about I respond, 'It is about fear and the different ways people will deal with a terrifying situation.'" Violi said. "I've tried to write a script that constantly builds tension and raises the stakes for the characters. There's definitely a sense that something big is going to happen. When the final punch is delivered, I think the audience will be shocked, saddened and relieved at once. It's pretty powerful."

***Riding the Comet*** is directed by Kyla Mostello Donnelly of Levittown, PA, who also directed the previous staged reading version. The cast is a fine mix of veterans and newcomers from NJ and PA, featuring Kathryn Skelly, Patrick Albanesi, Ed Patton, Brian Jason Kelly, John Helmke, William Schnakenberg and Anna Chandless as Andie, the young sister.

***Riding the Comet*** marks Violi's second produced play. He won acclaim in recent years for two local productions of his ***ROEBLING: The Story of the Brooklyn Bridge***, including the world premiere also produced by Actors' NET in September 2009. He has also written several screenplays, having optioned two comedy scripts to producers in Hollywood and New York. A well-known local actor most recently seen as Lt. Dan Kaffee in ***A Few Good Men*** at Kelsey Theater, Violi has dozens of stage, film, television and commercial roles to his credit.

**MORE**

***Riding the Comet*** by Mark Violi runs September 16 – October 2, 2011 at The Heritage Center, 635 N. Delmorr Ave. (Route 32), Morrisville, PA 19067. Performances are Fridays & Saturdays at 8:00 pm, Sundays at 2:00 pm. Adults \$20, Seniors \$17, and Children Under 13 \$15. Special veterans discount for this show: Veteran & Active Service, \$15; Senior Citizen Vets \$10.

**For more information:**

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More about the Comet Escape Line  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comet\\_line](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comet_line)

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## Riding the Comet

a new drama by Mark Violi  
directed by Kyla M. Donnelly

What would  
you sacrifice?

**Starring:**  
Kathryn Skelly  
Patrick Albanesius  
Ed Patton  
Brian Jason Kelly  
and  
Anna Chandless  
as Andie

**Featuring:**  
John Helmke  
Bill Schnakenberg

From the writer of *Roebling: The Story of the Brooklyn Bridge*, comes the premiere of local playwright Mark Violi's gripping WWII-era drama *Riding the Comet*.

**SEPTEMBER 16 - OCTOBER 2, 2011**

Fridays & Saturdays at 8:00 pm; Sundays at 2:00 pm

**THE HERITAGE CENTER**

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