



"I am thrilled to be bringing *CONRACK*, our musical adaptation of *The Water Is Wide*, to the stage in Beaufort, Pat Conroy's adopted home town," says Granville Wyche Burgess, bookwriter and lyricist for the musical and director of The Beaufort Theatre Company production of *CONRACK*.

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The show begins in 1969 with Beaufort's superintendent of schools' desperate search for anyone to teach on Yamacraw Island. The school there has been totally neglected - no books, no blackboard, no attention being paid to the students. One has to take a boat from the mainland to even reach the island.

Into this hornet's nest walks Pat Conroy, almost thirty, idealistic the way only a 60's hippie could be, and recently fired from his twentieth job in five years. He is only too happy to answer the ad for a teacher, especially since Dr. Piedmont informs him that "no experience is exactly what I'm lookin' for."

When Conroy meets the children - Cindy Lou, Mary, Prophet, Anna, Top Cat, and Richard - he discovers that they can scarcely read or write, know little math, and are wildly undisciplined, but their anger barely conceals their desperate need for a teacher who will actually care. Conroy is determined to be that teacher. Taking the kids trick or treating on the mainland provokes a crisis, and Conroy learns he must let go of the children, but not before they have learned the courage to succeed and the will to keep on learning.

Professional film and stage actor Blake Logan (above) portrays Pat Conroy. A native of Mobile, AL, Logan was unfamiliar with the story when he landed the role.

"Before officially accepting the role, I devoured *The Water is Wide*, he says. "I couldn't believe it had taken me that long to discover Pat Conroy and this book I now love! I knew of Conroy's name of course, and I remember reading that he had passed a few years ago, but I had no idea how wonderful an author he was."

Logan had never seen the movie *Conrack*, starring Jon Voight, either, which he now sees as a plus. "As an actor I always go into a new role with my own ideas and avoid being influenced by another actor's interpretation. I never want to be a copy of a copy of a copy."

He's enjoyed researching his role in other ways, he says. "Fortunately for me there has been no shortage of people in Beaufort happy to share their own personal recollections of Mr. Conroy. Jonathan Haupt of the Pat Conroy Literary Center has been a treasure trove of knowledge and resources."

Logan also has high praise for Granville Burgess, his director. "Working with the writer-creator of such a wonderful musical has been a real treat. If I have any questions concerning the text, Granville is right there to answer them. And like all successful writers, he knows his work can be improved upon and he is always willing to listen to suggestions and even incorporate them into the script. For years, Granville has been championing

Conrack

within a very competitive musical theatre industry and I'm honored that he's entrusted me to lead a work that's so



www.patconroyliterarycenter.org

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14444/14444-h/14444-h.htm>