

# all cars considered

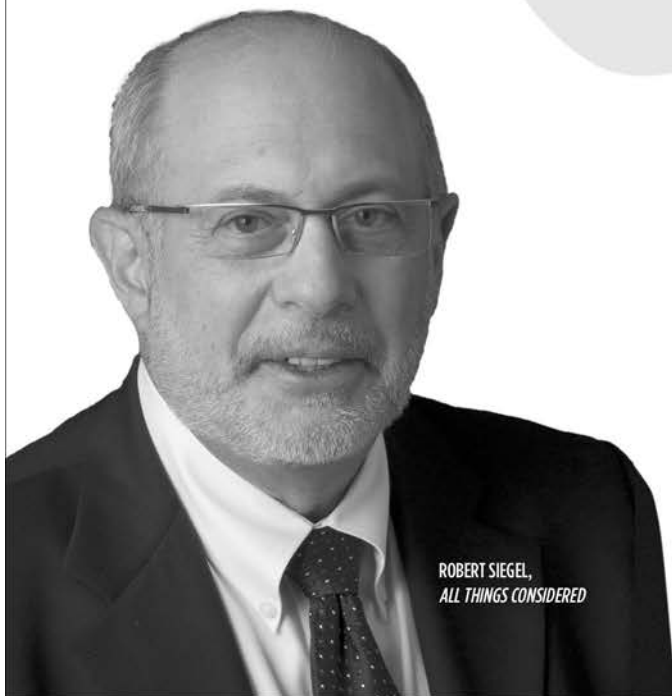
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ROBERT SIEGEL,  
ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

## Theater student puts decade of experience into Side Dish show

Just over 10 years ago, a little 10-year-old blonde dynamo walked into my theater summer camp and proceeded to soak up everything I could teach her about acting. Over the years, she tackled whatever character I threw at her with verve, even the title character of the golden goose in that famous fairy tale.

Rachel Robins went on to teach little ones herself, and now as a music theater major at UTEP takes on her first “adult” directorship with “Tick, Tick...Boom!” a Student Side Dish production at UTEP Dinner Theatre, where she has performed numerous times.

“This is actually my first time directing people above the age of 6, and the most obvious difference is that this cast can read,” Robins said. “A great thing that comes from working with children is letting them use their creativity and then molding it to fit the storyline. With adults, there isn’t an exorbitant amount of childlike-creative energy, but there’s a knowledge of the theater and theatrical workings. As a director, I’ve been trying to find ways to use their understanding of the theatrical world while also bringing in some of the childlike energy that so many of us seem to forget we have. I’m trying to get the ‘best of both worlds’ one might say.”

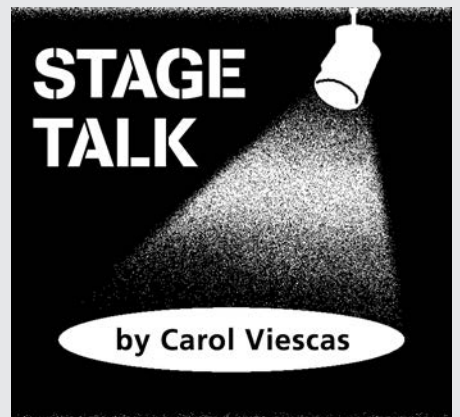
The Side Dish productions, introduced three years ago by UDT director Greg Taylor, are intended to give theater students a chance to direct a professional production.

“For the Student Side Dish production, there was an application process that took place over the summer,” Robins said. “‘Tick, Tick...Boom!’ is a show that I’ve known for a couple years now, and when the time came to apply for Side Dish, it was the first show that came to my mind. It fit all the requirements while being a show I really love.”

The show is an autobiographical musical written by Johnathan Larson of “Rent” fame.

“In ‘Tick, Tick...Boom!’ Jon is figuring out how to deal with the ongoing struggle of balancing creativity, family, and work while trying to fulfill his dreams,” Robins said. “With his encroaching 30th birthday, Jon is trying to navigate his mounting anxiety without falling apart completely.”

The musical only has three actors, two of whom play multiple characters, thus qualifying for the Student Side Dish program. Unlike most UDT offerings, the program’s plays do not include dinner.



“In the role of Jon is Jeffrey Quintana, a UTEP double major in dance and music theater who has been seen many times before on the dinner theater stage,” Robins said. “As Susan (and others) is Larissa Reyes, a recent transfer student majoring in music theater, and this will be her second time on the UDT stage. Finally, as Michael (and others), Malcom Stokes will be performing on the dinner theater stage for the first time.”

Even though Robins has been involved in theater for almost 11 years, working with the EPCC Performers Studio, UTEP Department of Theatre and Dance, UTEP Department of Music, UTEP Dinner Theatre, Plaza Theatre, Magoffin Auditorium, Chamizal National Memorial, El Paso Youth Opera, and the Gilbert and Sullivan Company of El Paso, she said she had to learn to trust herself when it came to directing this show.

“As someone who is usually on the stage and making ‘actor choices,’ it’s been a bit of an adjustment to take what the actors are giving me and molding it to fit the storyline and where/how it needs to build. On this front, I’m learning more and more every day. I continue to try to trust that I’ve done the prep work to prepare myself and my cast for this journey.”

But her cast, she said, has helped make her job easier.

“My biggest joy so far is seeing how excited my actors were when they all sang together for the first time. When they all learned their harmonies, and knew what they were singing - the excitement was palpable, the air was electric, and I had a huge surge of joy and excitement. It was honestly one of the best moments of my adult life.”

*Carol Viescas is a veteran of community theater and teaches journalism at Bel Air High School.*

“Tick, Tick...Boom!” runs 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 2:30 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 1-10, at the UTEP Dinner Theatre. Tickets: \$10-\$15. Information: 747-6060 or [utep.edu/udt](http://utep.edu/udt),

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