

New Stephen Stahl play will open Off-Broadway

"Straight to Hell" examines drug addiction, the hope of recovery.

Every day after recovery is like Valentine's Day.

That's how Richard Hudson, who was slowly killing himself with a nasty heroin addiction, lives his life now.

The teenager, who is the main character in a new play, "Straight to Hell," based on the true story of novelist Kathleen Hudson's son, finds redemption and happiness after years of pain as a drug addict.

Written and directed by New Hope-based playwright, filmmaker and theater director Stephen Stahl, and produced by On The Run Productions, the two-act play premieres Off-Broadway at 8 p.m. March 13 at the Abingdon Theatre Arts Complex at 312 W. 36th St. in the June Havoc Main Theatre. It opens to the public on March 14 with performances through March 25.

The multi-media theater event is subtitled "An Audacious Look At The Effects Drug Addiction Has On A Family And The Honorability That Follows With Sobriety."

Stahl, who is in recovery himself after years of battling a drug and alcohol addiction, wrote the play, and believes the message is an important one.

"So many people who suffer from addiction feel hopeless, and their families often have no idea how to help them," he says. "Straight to Hell" really explores the pain of addiction on both the addict and his family, but it also offers hope, and shows how through love, hope and effort, people's lives can be changed for the positive."

Stahl, who recently received the New York International Independent Film and Video Festival's Feature Film-Genre Award for Best Thriller and Best Director for a Featured Film for his first feature film, "Consequences," has been producing, directing and writing plays for more than 30 years. He is best known for his play "Lady Day," which won him numerous awards, as well as other produc-

tions in Philadelphia and New York.

The cast includes Jules Hartley, Carolin Haydee Lopez, John Dalmon, Patrick Knighton, Annette Hillary and Paul Huffler, and Ryan O'Gara, associate lighting designer for "Avenue Q" and "Jersey Boys" (both Tony Award winners), heads the production crew along with Broadway designers Adam Larsen (video) and Brett Jarvis (music and sound).

Hudson, a Cape May, N.J., resident, is a first-time novelist and is excited that her book's message will reach audiences through theater.

"Through the medium of the theater," she says, "I have been given the opportunity to show everyone, even the worst substance abuser, that they already possess the willpower they need to change their lives — if they just believe in themselves."

In addition to the weeknight performances, the play will have two Saturday matinees, scheduled for 3 p.m. March 17 and 24.

Tickets: \$18; they can be purchased at SmartTix Entertainment Services, 312 W. 36th St., New York, N.Y., 10018; by phone at (212) 868-4444; or on the Web site: www.smarttix.com.

Bristol Riverside

'Bully Pulpit' to open

President Theodore Roosevelt takes the stage at Bristol Riverside Theatre, portrayed by actor and playwright Michael O. Smith, in his one-man play "The Bully Pulpit."

It opens with previews Feb. 27 and 28 and then runs through March 17.

Performances are at 2 and 8 p.m. Wednesdays and Saturdays, at 8 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays, and at 3 p.m. Sundays.

Set in Roosevelt's Sagamore Hill, N.Y., home, the play transpires in 1918, on the occasion of Roosevelt's 60th birthday, what we now know was less than three months before his death. He is

10 years out of office as president, yet is as vibrant in spirit and exuberant in his storytelling as ever. But while reflecting upon the many adventures — and tragedies — in his life, he's trying to come to grips with the legacy he will leave behind: war hero or conservationist ... president or father?

Roosevelt, who is noted for the "Teddy" Bear named after him and his quote — "speak softly and carry a big stick," was born into a wealthy family in New York in 1858, but at one time worked as a cowboy and rancher in the West. He was police commissioner of New York City, became a war hero for leading the Rough Riders' charge of San Juan Hill in Cuba during in the Spanish-American War, then later received the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his diplomatic efforts in ending the Russo-Japanese War. He negotiated U.S. control of the construction of the Panama Canal, and also exercised his power as president to declare large areas of land as federally protected wildernesses.

But when asked what he felt his greatest accomplishment was, he preferred to dwell not on his often-tough public persona but upon his role as family man stating: "I have the happiest home life of any man whom I have ever known."

Twice married and father of six, Roosevelt was a man of great affection for his family. On the same day in February 1884, in the same house, both his mother (typhoid) and first wife (complications from childbirth) died. His one sentence entry into his diary: "The light has gone out of my life."

Tickets: previews, \$29, with a "pay what you can" option for at-door sales; \$34 to \$37, depending on the day of performance.

The theater is at 120 Radcliffe St. in Bristol Borough.

Information and reservations: (215) 785-0100, www.BRIStage.org.