

# SIGHT & SOUND

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have it all?*

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# Can you really have it all?

*LMC's production of 'The Heidi Chronicles' delves into heady days of women's movement*

By **JEREMY D. BONFIGLIO**  
Sight & Sound Editor

BENTON HARBOR — Meghan Pelkey missed the stage.

It had been a couple of years since the St. Joseph native and Lake Michigan College graduate had appeared in a play, so on a whim she auditioned for LMC's production of "The Heidi Chronicles."

"It was really a last-minute decision for me to audition, but I missed doing theater," Pelkey says. "I didn't know the show at all, and I didn't do any research. I learned a monologue two days before auditions and that was it. Not a lot of people do this show either, which is a shame because, as I've discovered, it's really a great show with a lot of great themes."

When LMC presents "The Heidi Chronicles" on Friday, Saturday and Sunday at Lake Michigan College's Hanson Theatre, Pelkey stars as title character Heidi Holland who navigates the changing role of women from the 1960s through the 1980s in Wendy Wasserstein's 1989 Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning play.

"It was a pretty tumultuous time for women's rights and women's role in American society," director Larry Nielsen says. "Wendy Wasserstein really captures that whole period so well with grace and sensitivity. It explores that generation of women from the social and political activism of the '60s to the success oriented '80s where there was a lot of change and discussion of can you have a career and a family? Can you have it all, or do you have to compromise? At the end of the day, what all the characters in the play have to decide is are they happy with the life that they've led."

Told in a series of vignettes, the dramedy follows Heidi from high school in the idealistic 1960s to her career as an art historian in the materialistic 1980s and how she copes with feminism, men, politics and motherhood. In essence, it's a coming of age story



Timothy Aranyos Jr., left, as Scoop, and Paul Stortz as Peter Patrone rehearse a scene from Lake Michigan College's production of "The Heidi Chronicles."

that looks at the world through the eyes of a woman searching for identity, truth and family, and confronting what it takes to have it all in the heady days of the women's movement.

"I had just not really been absorbed into this recent history until this show," says Pelkey, a 2012 graduate of Michigan Lutheran High School who works in LMC's records department. "I never really considered or thought about how much women did struggle. I didn't know women had to do these things. That they had to have sit-ins and protests, and that it was a really big deal. It also wasn't that long ago, so it's an odd feeling to think that the liberation women have hasn't been around for that long."

But the play is much more than a feminist's take on those defining years. It also includes the themes of friendship, achievement and

**IF YOU GO**

**What:** Lake Michigan College presents "The Heidi Chronicles"

**When:** 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and 3 p.m. Sunday

**Where:** Lake Michigan College's Hanson Theatre, 2755 E. Napier Ave., Benton Harbor

**How much:** \$7, \$5 for students/seniors

**Contact:** 927-1221 or [www.themendelcenter.com](http://www.themendelcenter.com)

balance as examined through the title character's interaction with Los Angeles producer Susan (Paige Smillie), gay New York

pediatrician Peter Patrone (Paul Stortz) and arrogant magazine publisher Scoop Rosenbaum (Timothy Aranyos Jr.) Additional characters are played by Kraig Kirkdorfer, Megan Hamel, Micah Johnson and Candace Myers.

The play is also known for historical snapshots of these eras with references ranging from the Eugene McCarthy presidential campaign to the outpouring of grief after John Lennon was killed.

"Because our cast is so young, we provided background of some of the issues going on during these time periods," Nielsen says. "It was a great learning experience for people in the cast. In fact, with the program booklets being handed out (at performances), there are references from the different eras that we portray so audiences who may not have lived



Photos provided / Lake Michigan College

**Meghan Pelkey, left and on the cover, as Heidi Holland, and Timothy Aranyos Jr., as Scoop, rehearse a scene from Lake Michigan College's production of "The Heidi Chronicles."**

through that can get some of these references."

The play contains plenty of humor and wit, but it also deftly explores the concept of women "having it all," and how they cope with the idea that it may never be realized. While the play is certainly a period piece, Pelkey believes some of the same issues addressed in this show continue to be a struggle

for women of her generation as well.

"It's been fun to play a woman in those eras because she's a really strong character and really independent throughout the whole show," Pelkey says. "It's because of that strength and independence that the idea of having children ends up being a really big theme. Heidi wants to have children and wants to have a career, and I think a lot of

women struggle with that both then and today. I don't think that's something that is ever going to go away. I just think it's easier to balance today."

Nielsen sees other comparisons as well. "Just look at the comments one of the presidential candidates made last week," he says. "John Kasich said women 'came out of their kitchens' to support him, and there was

a backlash to that. It begs the question of what role do we see women in today if we are still having some of these same discussions? Can women have a balance of career and family? Should women get the same pay as men? These are subjects that I think are just as relevant today."

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