

By Melissa Howsam



http://artsnownc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/emily_

Emily Leonard

Letting her hair down, so to speak, is Emily Leonard, playing Rapunzel in NC Theatre's hot, upcoming production "**Into the Woods**," (<http://nctheatre.com/shows/into-woods>) opening Oct. 20 at Raleigh Memorial Auditorium. The show blends an all-star Broadway cast and NCT vets.

Straight off its red-carpet success (hey, Oscar and Golden Globe nods!) as a film adaptation starring Meryl Streep and Emily Blunt, the magical musical, first staged at San Diego's Old Globe in 1986, was written by James Lapine, with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, and tells the story of a childless baker and his bride who venture — where else — into the woods to break a curse. En route they encounter a host of fairy tale phenoms: Cinderella, Jack (of the Beanstalk fame), Little Red Riding Hood and more, ultimately faced with the lesson of what comes with getting what you want (read: before and after "happily ever after").

Leonard stars alongside such Broadway heavyweights as NC Theatre vet Jacquelyn Piro Donovan (think "Les Mis" and "Miss Saigon"), set to play the Witch; Laurel Harris, returning home to play the Baker's Wife after a run as Elphaba in the "Wicked" Broadway National Tour that came to the Bull City this past January; and six-show Broadway vet and NCT fave Dirk Lumbard, stepping into the role of Narrator/Mysterious Man in what will be his eighth NCT production.

In preview of the much anticipated show, ArtsNow gets real with Rapunzel about what audiences can expect, the Triangle's theater scene and why "Into the Woods" is a must-watch.

What can audiences expect at your show? This show is a great twist on so many classic fairy tales, and you find out what it really takes to get to 'happily ever after' — and what happens after that. It has everything: magic and fantasy, love, humor, loss and what it means to grow up.

What's it like performing at NCT? It's been amazing! I grew up in Apex and did several shows at NCT as a kid, so to come full circle here is really gratifying. The community at NCT is really strong and supportive, so it's been easy to just jump in immediately with both feet — which is vital when you're putting up a show in such a limited amount of time.

What's special about the Triangle theater scene? The Triangle has such a huge concentration of talent, and it's rare to find something like that outside of a major 'theater city' like New York or Chicago. Because of that, the Triangle can support an extremely rich and diverse theater scene. It also means that audiences get to see locally based actors of really great caliber, and the area provides wonderful training opportunities for young people interested in pursuing careers in theater, such as **NC Theatre's Conservatory (<http://nctheatre.com/page/about-conservatory>)**.

Why is this a must-see? It has a two-person cow puppet! Plus TWO broad-shouldered singing princes and pyrotechnics ... what more could you need?

NC Theatre's "Into the Woods" (<http://nctheatre.com/shows/into-woods>)

October 20 to 25, Raleigh Memorial Auditorium

Buy tickets (<http://www.ticketmaster.com/venueartist/115203/708548>)