

Nadine Bernard

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NEWS

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RELEASE DATE January 10, 2010

Parlor Reading of New Play to Benefit the Van Vleck House on Valentine's Day Weekend

Glen Ridge, NJ: Sixty years before the verses of Hallmark lined the shelves of the stationery stores, one visionary woman began crafting lavish, hand-made cards and romantic mottos in some of the very first Valentine's Day cards in the United States. The new play by Nadine Bernard, "Miss Valentine," tells the tale of Esther Howland, "The Mother of the American Valentine," and how she single-handedly began a lucrative Valentine's Day card business in the mid-1800s and charmed the romantic lives of those around her. Esther Howland's story is intertwined with her imagined fantasies about the legend of Saint Valentine who was in prison for performing marriage ceremonies against the Roman Emperor's decree. Saint Valentine acts as Esther's muse as she creates the romantic cards.

The full length play will be presented from 8pm-10pm on Friday, February 12th and Saturday, February 13th as a parlor reading to benefit the Van Vleck House and Gardens in Montclair. The reading will take place in the living room of the Van Vleck House, with doors opening at 7:30pm. The role of Esther Howland will be read by Jessica Colotta from Wayne who is a graduate student at Montclair State. Other roles will be read by Emily Rees from Montclair, Cindy Summers from Bloomfield, Erel Pilo originally from Closter, and Mark Simmons from Verona. Frank Di Filia of Glen Ridge will direct the reading. Live harp music will accompany the reading, and Valentine's Day themed refreshments will be available. A suggested donation of \$10/per person is requested.

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Nadine Bernard is a performer and playwright who lives in Glen Ridge, and currently can be seen touring local hospitals with a solo performance of “In the Shadow of My Son,” a groundbreaking play about postpartum depression which has been performed at the New York International Fringe Festival 2007 and throughout New Jersey, New York State, Arizona and Canada. A monologue from the play was recently published in the Smith and Kraus volume “The Best Women's Stage Monologues of 2008.” Her play, “The Way to Summer” was honored in the Jewish Ensemble Theater's Festival of New Plays in 2008 and appeared as a staged reading at the Jewish Community Center in Manhattan. She is currently writing the play “Veils”, about three suburban New Jersey women whose belly dancing class turns into a support group.

All proceeds from the event will support the care and maintenance of the Van Vleck House & Gardens. To learn more about the “Miss Valentine” reading at the Van Vleck House, please visit their website at www.vanvleck.org. Reservations are required. **Please call** 973-744-4752 or email info@vanvleck.org.