

FEB.
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Actor Tom Story grew up here: "I'm a product of this town's theater culture, and I've seen it explode over the years."

If you've been to the theater more than once this past year, chances are you've seen **Tom Story**. He's one of Washington's most prolific actors, tackling roles that have ranged from the young Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* to Andy Warhol in *Pop!* This month, he plays one of the two leads in Geoffrey Nauft's drama *Next Fall* at Bethesda's Round House Theatre. Here's a conversation with Story.

Tell us about *Next Fall*.

I play a writer named Adam who's in his late thirties and struggling with what to do in his life, but he's very witty. He meets a younger guy and begins a relationship, and the issue isn't so much their age difference—which is around ten years—as it is that the younger man, Luke, is a born-again Christian. It's a play about religion in the modern world, faith, and the conflict between the gay-rights movement and Christianity.

What appealed to you about the character?

I'm always looking for different kinds of roles. It's hard being an actor in a town like Washington—people see you a lot, and to make a living you have to keep working, so

it's inevitable you're going to repeat yourself. I try over the course of the season to have one or two things that really stretch me, and I thought I could bring something to this role.

What was your favorite role in 2011?

I loved playing Andy Warhol. It was a singing Warhol, which seems insane and was unlike anything I'd ever done, so it was really hard but brought me a lot of joy.

How did you become interested in theater?

I grew up in Northern Virginia, so my early education in the theater was going into DC—Arena, Shakespeare, Studio, and Woolly Mammoth. My last two years at Woodbridge High School, I went every weekend. I'm a product of this town's theater culture, and I've seen it explode over the years, although there was tons going on back then, too—amazing actors I'm lucky to work with now, like Ted van Griethuysen, Floyd King, Nancy Robinette, Sarah Marshall.

Your real-life boyfriend, Chris Dinolfo, plays your boyfriend in *Next Fall*.

It'll be interesting. It's another part of the experience that's new, because we've worked together before but never like this, where we're the central relationship of the play. In many ways, I think it'll be easier, because when you start working on a show you have to start relationships with strangers. I'm looking forward to it.

What else do you have planned?

I have a part in the musical *1776* at Ford's Theatre, and rehearsals start the day *Next Fall* opens. At the end of that run, I'll start *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at Shakespeare Theatre Company. I'm playing Dr. Caius—he's a funny Shakespeare clown, but in a different genre from characters I've played before. He's French, for one thing. I've never played a French person before.

"Next Fall" is at Round House Theatre February 1 through 26. Tickets (\$26 to \$61) at roundhousetheatre.org.