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## Curtains up for Curtainbox: Theater continues its storied history with Q-C bow

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**By Sean Leary**

Kim Furness has survived life as a tutor for Anna Nicole Smith, struggled through being a starving actor in L.A. and is one of very few local thespians who manages to maintain a dramatic career without a day job.

Now, she's embarking on yet another daunting challenge.

Starting up a theater group.

"Yeah, I know it's crazy," Ms. Furness laughed. "But I'm really excited about it."

Actually, it's more accurate to say she's resurrecting a theater group, since Curtainbox, which debuts "Danny and the Deep Blue Sea" this weekend, has its origins in Hollywood, where it was formed in 2001.

"We started with five original members -- myself being the spearhead, my husband David Furness, and three of my friends, Kyle Bornheimer, who went on to star in CBS' 'Worst Week,' Allison Francis, who works for director Robert Zemeckis (who won an Oscar for 'Forrest Gump') and Dalia Vosylius," Ms. Furness said. "We all met in acting class and we thought producing our own plays would be a great way to get casting directors to come out to see us. We had three productions and were quite successful."

Ms. Furness has spent most of her life bouncing between Southern California and the Quad-Cities. She grew up in Davenport, but at 16 moved to the L.A. area to attend the Idyllwild Performing Arts Academy. She started college in Cincinnati, but quickly transferred to St. Ambrose University, which she "loved," and from which she gained a degree in Mass Communications and Theater. Shortly



**Photo:** curtainbox2.tif: Eddie Staver III and Kim Furness act out a scene from Curtainbox Theater's "Danny and the Deep Blue Sea." (Submitted)



**Photo:** curtainbox1.tif: From left, "Danny and the Deep Blue Sea" star Eddie Staver III, producer and actress Kim Furness and director, Daniel Sheridan. (Submitted)

after graduation, she moved to Chicago, and then back to SoCal.

Ms. Furness had a storied career in Hollywood. While pursuing acting -- which would land her cameo spots on the TV shows ``That '70s Show" and ``Life On A Stick," not to mention roles in ``tons" of indie films -- she worked for the Beverly Hills Tutoring Center, which zoomed her into the orbit of scores of celebs.

``I worked as a tutor for Anna Nicole Smith, which was ... interesting," she said. ``I worked with her son, Daniel, who died. He was a great kid.

``I worked with Dakota Fanning, she was a lovely, lovely young lady. I also worked with Flea, from the Red Hot Chili Peppers; Georges Marciano, the founder of Guess; Danny DeVito, and Damon Wayans. I home schooled his kids. They were all great, great wonderful people."

However, the high cost of living in Southern California and the desire to ``actually afford to buy a house and start a family," brought her back to her Midwest roots in 2005.

``My husband and I would like to be able to buy a house and have kids," she said. ``But we'd need to make more than six figures to be able to do that in Southern California. Here in the Quad-Cities it's much more affordable."

Particularly since Ms. Furness has been able to consistently line up paying gigs at professional mainstays like Circa '21, Junior Theater and New Ground Theater.

``Fortunately Denny Hitchcock (of Circa '21) put me to work right away, and I've been able to find consistent work as an actress here ever since," she said.

The for-profit Curtainbox, which is paid for out of Ms. Furness's checkbook, won't be doing any full four-or-five-show-a-year seasons, she said, rather producing shows as she can afford to do them.

``It's a labor of love," she said. ``I'm trying to choose shows minimal in set and production values so I can pay my actors. I want to be able to provide another venue for local actors to make a living."

The current feature, ``Danny and the Deep Blue Sea" follows that template, offering its fireworks in its writing and the meaty actor's roles rather than any elaborate production values. The tale of two down-and-outers who meet in a bar in New York City and stumble into a relationship is ``an actor's dream," Ms. Furness said.

``I think people will enjoy it," she said. ``It's really a story about the power of love and forgiveness."

The next Curtainbox show, if all goes well, will be David Mamet's ``Glengarry Glenross" next summer.

For more information on the group, see [www.thecurtainbox.com](http://www.thecurtainbox.com).

What: ``Danny and the Deep Blue Sea"

When: Thursday through Saturday at 7:30 p.m., Sunday at 2:30 p.m., Nov. 28-29 at 7:30 p.m., Nov. 30 at 2:30 p.m.

Where: The Village Theatre, 2113 E. 11th St., Davenport

Tickets: \$15 at the door or you can reserve by calling (563) 650-8121 or emailing your reservation to [reservations@thecurtainbox.com](mailto:reservations@thecurtainbox.com).