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## Excelsior husband and wife star as a couple in Minnetonka Theatre's 'On Golden Pond'

Kaitlin McCoskey [kaitlin.mccoskey@apgecm.com](mailto:kaitlin.mccoskey@apgecm.com)

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James Cada and Susanne Egli, who are starring as husband and wife in Minnetonka Theatre's first show of the season, "On Golden Pond," have spent 36 years preparing for the roles.

The production at the Arts Center on 7, located at 18285 Highway 7, Minnetonka, tells the story of Norman and Ethel Thayer, a married couple spending their 48th summer at their vacation home on Golden Pond. Their relaxing routine is given a "bitterly comedic edge," according to Minnetonka Theatre's synopsis. When their daughter Chelsea arrives with her new boyfriend and his son, resulting in a turbulent relationship between father and daughter. The show "illustrates the hilarious, heartbreaking, human moments of which life is made."

Cada and Egli, who have also been married for several decades, understand these life moments well. Working together since 1986, they have embodied several relationships, including costars, actors and directors, parents and grandparents. Each has theater, TV, and movie credits at a local and national level, and Cada has performed at the Chanhassen Dinner Theatre while Egli has worked at the Guthrie. Together, they have guest-directed 20 productions for Minnetonka High School.

Minnetonka Theatre's Artistic Director Trent Boyum said it is this commitment to the Minnetonka theater program that inspired Cada and Egli's involvement in "On Golden Pond."

“We’re thrilled to celebrate Jim and Susanne’s 20-year commitment to our students by having them appear on stage,” he said.

“We feel very committed to giving back to the community and using our skills as actors to start to help students understand what a great activity that is for your life,” Egli said. “Most people aren’t going to be professional actors, but they learn so much from a co-curricular activity that is really about team building. We’ve enjoyed it so much.”

“Both of our kids went to school at Minnetonka,” Cada said, recalling their early involvement with the district’s theater department. “They asked me, would you be interested in directing one show a year? And that was after our son had already graduated. Our daughter was in school there, in high school there, and we knew they had a strong program.”

“Jim and I have such different backgrounds,” Egli said, noting that she has a more traditional background in plays and Cada specializes in musicals and improvisation. “We were able to bring all of that with us; we’ve done so many different kinds of shows.”

Both shared that they plan to stay involved in Minnetonka’s theater program and aim to keep the arts a priority for students.

“We do feel very strongly that it’s so important for people to support the arts in the school system,” Egli said. “When we start cutting the arts, it’s so tragic for those students who, that’s their one thing they really enjoy, or help them to understand how to interact with each other, how to behave.

“It's really terrible to see schools that drop arts first, whether it's theater or music,” Cada said. “Something that gives joy to a person, where they can express themselves. They work together with other kids. They have fun.”

Egli noted that for several years now, the show they direct each year is a cell phone-free experience, encouraging students to engage with their peers.

“We always have a meeting with the parents right at the start of our rehearsals, so that they know how to reach us [by phone],” she noted. “And they're always curious, how do we work together? How does that work? We talk about how we divide the work and teach, and talk with the students about conflict.

“But we have a lot of fun... We're getting so old, we're like their grandparents now,” she joked. “We really are kind of like the characters in ‘On Golden Pond.’”

Cada and Egli said they believe their show will be a relatable one to many Minnesotans. While the story takes place in Maine, the story centers around the theme of cabin life.

“And it's at this stage in your life where you reflect back over going to the same cabin, having the same routines over your life, and how significant that is,” Egli said. “It tells a nice story, and I think it's heartwarming for all ages.”

After roughly a month of rehearsing, “On Golden Pond” is set to open on Sept. 14. The show runs through September, with shows scheduled for 7:30 p.m. on Sept. 14, 21, and 28 and at 2 p.m. Sept. 15, 21, 22, 28 and 29. Tickets are \$32 for adults, \$28 for seniors and \$15 for youth, with reserved seating and group rates available. Go to [minnetonkatheatre.com](https://minnetonkatheatre.com) for more information.

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