

# White Plains Playwright Tries Hand at Putting His Work on Film

By Martin Wilbur

For Richard Cirulli, it was time to try something different.

The playwright, author and retired professor had written and produced four plays for the troupe he established in 2016, the nonprofit organization The Demitasse Players, all performed at the White Plains Performing Arts Center or at Whippoorwill Hall in Armonk.

But on a weekend getaway last summer to the Catskills, Cirulli had the inspiration for his next work, not a play or a novel, but a short movie. The film, "An Existential Date" was shot mostly at the Wolf and Warrior Brewing Co. on East Post Road in White Plains on Jan. 30 and 31.

It's the story of two aging philosophy professors meeting at a local café for their first date. Cirulli's first draft of the story was written in one night, on a pad with pen and paper sitting poolside.

"I just really wanted to challenge myself," Cirulli explained about turning his latest project into a film rather than for the stage. "When I wrote it, I kept

looking at the script and I kept saying to myself I think it would work better as a movie than a play. The interaction would get lost in a play."

With the world still in the throes of COVID-19, there's also no telling when local venues will reopen to audiences – or when audiences might feel comfortable to return. But with social distancing achievable during filming with only a three-member cast for what is expected to be a 40- to 45-minute film, Cirulli expects to have final editing done this spring and ready for public consumption by summer.

"An Existential Date" also represents a departure for Cirulli in that he created a comedy with gallows humor. His four productions with the Demitasse Players were productions addressing heavy topics that had some connection to mental health, an issue that Cirulli cares deeply about.

Cirulli said with troupe members prodding him to feature his sense of humor, he tried a comedy to provide some welcome relief in a difficult time.



Cast members of The Demitasse Players' "An Existential Date," a short film written and produced by Richard Cirulli. Pictured, from left, are actors Robert Ansbro and Michelle Osojnak, Cirulli, Chris Casaburi, the film's director of cinematography, and cast member Dona L. White.

"Let's take some very philosophical language and turn it into hilarious conversation, and also to prove that the youth don't have a monopoly on romance," Cirulli said of the story.

While not autobiographical, Cirulli drew upon his years as a

philosophy professor to make the film as realistic as possible.

It features Robert Ansbro as Camu, Dona L. White as Neisky and Michelle Osojnak as the waitress.

"The two actors are very good once they get into it and I think

they get into the romance part," Cirulli said. "I'm having fun with it. I thought that two professors, existential performers on a date and you have to strategize how is this going to go."

Director of cinematography Chris Casaburi has been aware what Cirulli's been trying to do with The Demitasse Players, raising awareness for mental health. Proceeds from a planned premiere later this year will serve as a fundraiser for organizations related to mental health.

Casaburi said he met Cirulli while filming another short movie through a mutual acquaintance.

"I love the story, I love what he's doing for the community, so I kind of hopped on board with it," Casaburi said.

There's also a musical score that was written and performed by Drew Caico.

Cirulli is hopeful that later this year he can have the premiere when it is safe to do so, whether it be in White Plains or somewhere else in the county.

To learn more about The Demitasse Players, visit [www.demitasseplayers.com](http://www.demitasseplayers.com).

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