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Vol. 4.2

July, 2008

High School Musical on Stage Spotlights Area Youth

by John Lieder

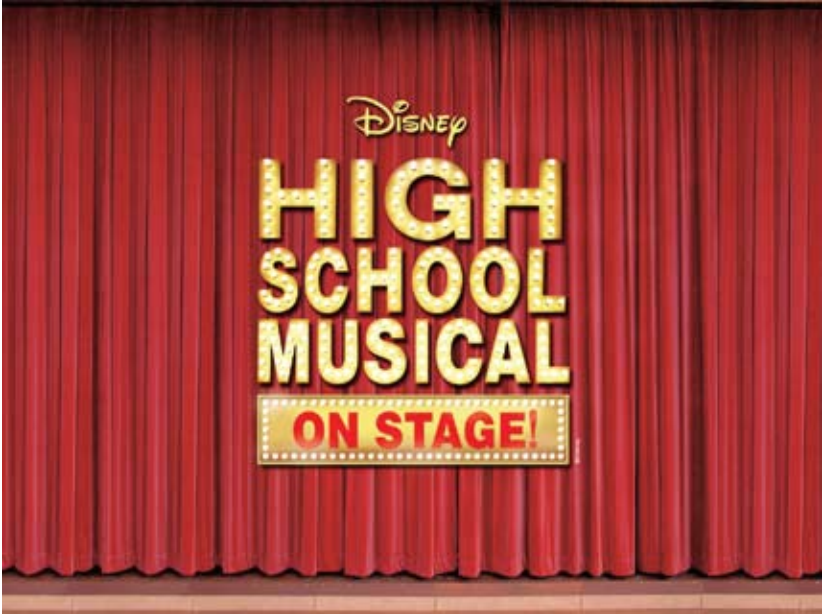
I know that some of us old fogies at Players rolled our eyes a little when we heard that the Finance and Playreading Committees chose *High School Musical on Stage* as the summer fundraiser. Folks from my generation and beyond have maybe heard a little about it—that it was based on the “made for TV” Disney Channel movie—but we likely can’t name any of the music from it. And we *may* know that it is something of a phenomenon among the teenage circuit. (Indeed, the soundtrack was the best-selling album in 2006, and its premiere was the most watched Disney Channel movie.) We assume, though, that it just can’t be up to the musical standard of Andrew Lloyd Webber, Harold Arlen and Meredith Willson, composers of a few of our most recent summer productions.

Well, it isn’t Lloyd Webber, Arlen or Willson, but it doesn’t really try to be. What it is, is a lot of fun, and, judging from my impressions from the June 27 rehearsal, *HSM on Stage* promises to be a show full of energy, brimming over with some of our community’s best young talent and certainly worthy of the venerable Players’ stage.

The musical that the high school is producing is a “neo-feminist” retelling of *Romeo and Juliet* named “Juliet and Romeo” with three tap numbers, and *High School Musical on Stage* is itself based rather loosely on *Romeo and Juliet*. It contains more than a dozen songs, which are all fun to hear and watch. Lead actors in this production are **Jennifer Koth** and **Sean Stevens** as love interests Gabriella Montez and Troy Bolton, with

strong support from **Erica Savage** and **Drew Eberhard** as twins Sharpay and Ryan Evens, their antagonists. Bethany Salm plays Kelsi Neillsen, the student who has written “Juliet and Romeo.” **Dakota McDaniels** is Jack Scott, the student public address announcer who gets some of the show’s best comic moments (although I was getting the giggles throughout the rehearsal). A bevy of nearly 50 “jocks,” “brainiacs,” “cheerleaders,” and other assorted high school nuts quite literally fills the stage. **Vie Anglin-Jones**, **Brian Clark** and **Katie Klemp** portray faculty members and the only adult characters in the cast.

The production is being directed by **Matt Dratt**, and **Whitney Spencer** is the choreographer. The entire crew list numbers



... continued on page 4.

COMMUNITY PLAYERS
Calendar

July - August 2008

Board Meetings

July 15, 16, 7:00 p.m.
Aug. 12, 6:00 p.m.
Community Players Theatre

High School Musical

Preview: July 10
Shows: July 11-13, 17-20, 24-27

Steel Magnolias

Auditions: July 28-29
Preview: Sept. 4
Shows: Sept. 5-7, 11-14, 18-20

Tickets can be ordered online at
www.communityplayers.org.
Click on "Online Ticket Sales."



Community Players

201 Robinhood Lane
Bloomington, IL 61701
309-663-2121
www.communityplayers.org

Newsletter Committee

Jim Kalmbach
Barb Lemmon
John Lieder
Bob McLaughlin

We are always looking for
writers, artists, designers and
story ideas. Send comments and
suggestions to lieder78@yahoo.com

Curtain Calls is published six
times a year for the voting mem-
bers of Community Players.

For information about joining us,
please contact our membership
chair, Barb Lemmon at
barb.lemmon@comcast.net.

Back issues of *Curtain Calls*
are available on the Commu-
nity Players web site. Click on
"Newsletter Archive."

Steel Magnolias

Steel Magnolias, a
favorite of stage and film,
comes to Community
Players Theater this fall.

Director **Joann Yant** is
looking for six women,
ages 18 and over, to
form the tightly knit
circle of friends who find
strength, comfort, and humor in each other, even when faced with tragedy. We
will be focusing on a person's ability to portray naturalness on stage--in speech, in
interactions, in emotion, and in presence.

Auditions will consist of cold readings from staff selected monologues and sections
of the script. Do not bring a prepared monologue; a choice of short pieces will be
provided to you when you arrive.

Auditions are **Monday, July 28th** and **Tuesday, July 29th** at Community Players
Theater. We will begin promptly at 7 p.m.; doors will open at 6:30 p.m. No
experience necessary!

The pay what you can preview for *Steel Magnolias* is Thursday, September 4. The
show will run September 5-7, 11-14, 18-20.

Joann Yant, Director: hstry95@yahoo.com
Judy Stroh, Assistant Director
Tom Smith, Producer

Steel Magnolias



Call for Play Suggestions

Playreading Chair **Sally Parry** is calling
for suggestions for Community Players'
2009-2010 season. Send titles of
musicals, comedies, and dramas.
Brief descriptions of the plays and
explanations of why they would be
good for Players are also welcome.
Suggestions can be sent to Community
Players Theater, Attn: Sally Parry,
201 Robinhood Lane, PO Box 1706,
Bloomington, IL 61702-1706 or to
separry@ilstu.edu. The Playreading
Committee needs all suggestions by
September 1.

Harmon Grant

Community Players has received a
\$1000 Town of Normal Harmon Arts
Grant to support our production of *The
Woman in Black* this November. *The
Woman in Black* is the second in a new
series of Community Players Lab Shows.
This series offers plays that are edgier
or more off-beat than our subscription
series shows and is designed to develop
audiences and offer different kinds of
challenges to our actors and designers.
Kudos to Treasurer **Jason Wiggins** and
the Grants Committee.

New York Report: The Tony Awards and More

by Bob McLaughlin

If you watched the Tony Awards all the way to the end on Sunday, June 15, you may have caught a brief glimpse of a familiar face among the crowd onstage accepting the award for Best Musical. Yes, **Mariano Tolentino**, veteran of many Community Players shows, most recently *Crazy for You*, is an investor in *In the Heights*, the exuberant new Latin-themed musical about life in a Washington Heights neighborhood over a hot Fourth of July weekend, and so he got to share the glory when the play picked up the evening's top honor.

Sally Parry and I were seated considerably farther back in Radio City Music Hall, but we were two rows in front of many of the cast of *In the Heights*, who cheered uproariously and infectiously at each mention of their show. When host Whoopi Goldberg announced it as Best Musical, they went running down the aisle and up on stage, and we were so happy for them, that if we looked even a little Latin, we would have gone with them. As it was, we had to settle on congratulating Mariano and his wife in the lobby afterward. (We also congratulated them on the recent birth of their twin boys.) I wonder if the Tony Award is like the Stanley Cup, where everyone on the winning team gets to keep it for one day? If Mariano gets to bring the Tony to Bloomington, we should have a party!

Other highlights of our New York theatergoing . . .

A Catered Affair: A new musical for which Mariano is one of the producers, this is about a modest family in the Bronx and their conflict over whether they should spend bereavement money from the death of their soldier son in Korea on a fancy wedding for their daughter or on another share of the father's taxicab. With a book by Harvey Fierstein and score by John Bucchino, the play explores the desperation of constrained, unhappy lives (think *The Honeyymooners* without the jokes) and the hope for happiness that never dies.

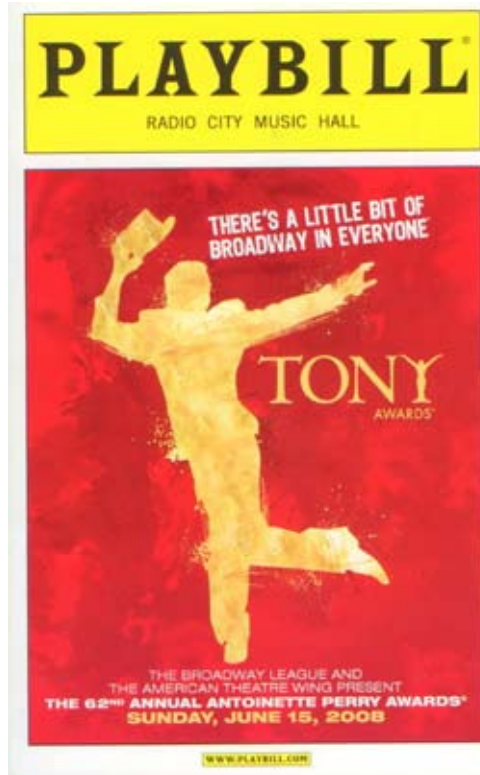
Saved: This wonderful new musical being presented Off-Broadway at Playwrights Horizons has music and lyrics by Michael Friedman and book and lyrics by John Dempsey and Rinne Groff. Set in a Christian high school, it's centered on a girl (Celia Keenan-Bolger) whose boyfriend suspects he's gay. She prays, and Jesus appears to her to tell her to help him. She tries, but everything turns out disastrously (and hilariously) wrong. Very funny, very moving, a great score, and a wonderful cast.

Gypsy: This classic is given a first-rate revival—everything from orchestra to physical design to the cast is sumptuous and always interesting. Predictably, Patti LuPone as Rose makes a few peculiar acting choices and at times, while singing, is oblivious to pitches and diction, but is nevertheless powerful in the role. Boyd Gaines and Laura Benanti are equally excellent as Herbie

and Louise/Gypsy.

Take Me Along: Another revival, this one Off-Broadway at the Irish Repertory Theater. With music and lyrics by Bob Merrill and book by Joseph Stein and Robert Russell, This play is a 1959 musical version of Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!* Set during a Fourth of July weekend in a small Connecticut city, it tells a charming and bittersweet story of young and old love. A perfect evening in the theater, this production shows what you can do with a talented cast and an imaginative creative team, even in a small space with a small budget.

Adding Machine: This new Off-Broadway musical, with music by Joshua Schmidt and book and lyrics by Schmidt and Jason Loewith, is based on Elmer Rice's classic play about a henpecked bookkeeper named Mr. Zero. Abused at home and ignored at the office, he finally snaps and kills his boss, is executed, and goes to heaven. He has a chance for happiness there but he is too dull and closed-minded to take it until, perhaps, the very end.



... *High School Musical* preview continued from page 1.

twenty-four, including **Kameron Cox** and **Cathy Sutliff** (co-producers), **Brett Cottone** (Set Designer and Light Designer), **George Jones** (Master Builder), **Bonnie Martin** (Costume Designer), **Gary Ploense** (Sound Designer), **Sherri Scott** (Props), **Cris Embree** (Stage Manager) and **Pat Parmenter** (House Manager). **Jessica Stiller** is leading the music. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first time that Players is using pre-recorded music rather than piano or orchestra to accompany the singers.

Since this is the summer fundraiser, there are naturally various fundraising activities in orbit about this production. The major fundraising activity is a raffle that has a grand prize of two round-trip tickets to Orlando and tickets to Walt Disney World. Those who purchase \$10 worth of raffle tickets will have a chance to win a role and dance in the final number. After watching this cast rehearse, I think that could be a real hoot, even for an old fogey.

The pay-what-you-can preview performance of *High School Musical on Stage* is Thursday, July 10. Regular performances are July 11-13, July 17-20 and July 24-27. As usual, all evening performances begin at 7:30 and Sunday matinees begin at 2:30.



Farewell, Bob Manasco

Bob Manasco, who has worked at Community Players as an actor (*Kiss Me, Kate, 1776, How to Succeed, Secret Garden, Amadeus, Don Juan in Hell*) and as music director (*South Pacific*), has accepted a new job at John Deere in Davenport, Iowa, and will be moving there in August. We wish him well and will miss his talent, his good humor, and his devotion to the theater.

High School Musical Rehearsal Pictures



Sean Stevens and **Jennifer Koth** rehearse one of their early scenes.



The basketball team runs through drills and harmonizes as they encourage each other to "Get'cha Head in the Game."

Choreographer **Whitney Spencer** directs the cast through a rehearsal of one of the show's large dance numbers (below).

