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# *Play It Again, Sam* Playing for First Time at CP

by John Lieder

Written in 1969, Woody Allen’s clever homage to Humphrey Bogart finally makes its way to the Players stage in our “Season of Firsts.” Another first, **Kameron Cox** makes his directorial debut with a talented cast, anchored by **Thom Rakestraw** who returns after a 3-year hiatus as Allan Felix. I witnessed the February 23rd run-through of the show and I don’t recall Thom ever leaving the stage for more than a moment.

Allen Felix, recovering from a broken marriage, is helped by friends Linda and Dick Christie (played by **Hannah Kerns** and **Brett Cottone**) who try to get him back into the dating scene. The action weaves in and out of the mind of Felix as the play progresses back and forth between reality and Felix’s imagination. The set helps the audience distinguish between reality and Felix’s imagination as the actors make their entrances for the imagination sequences between the walls of the set, whereas they enter through the usual doors for the reality

sequences. The set is cleverly designed and built by **Jeremy Stiller** with help from **Dave Fuller** as set decorator.

Felix gets dating advice from the ghost of Humphrey Bogart (quite believably portrayed by **Kevin Wickart**) who has the trademark Bogart lisp and mannerisms down quite pat. Rounding out the cast are **Rebecca Peacock** as Gina/Intellectual Girl and newcomers **Amy Waggoner** as Nancy Felix, **Melissa Fitzgerald** as Dream Sharon/Vanessa and **Michelle Jacobson** as Sharon Lake/Go-Go Girl/Barbara Tyler.

**Tom Smith** and Kerns are co-producers. **Judy Stroh** is assistant director/stage manager with help from **Jeff Ready** as stage hand. **Dorothy Mundy** is in charge of properties with assistance from **Diane Nelson** and **Carol Plotkin**, and **Opal Virtue** is doing costumes. **Dan Virtue** is lighting technician and **Pete Tenuto** and newcomer **DJ LaRocque** are sound technicians.



Hannah Kerns, Thom Rakestraw, Brett Cottone and Michelle Jacobson rehearse a scene from *Play it Again, Sam*.

The pay-what-you-can Preview performance is March 4. Regular performances are March 5-7, 11-14 and 18-20. As usual, all evening performances begin at 7:30 and Sunday matinees are at 2:30.

March - April 2010

**Board Meetings**

Mar. 9 6:00 p.m.  
April 13, 6:00 p.m.  
Community Players Theatre

**Play it Again, San**

Preview: March 4  
Shows: March 5-7, 11-14, 18-20

**Side by Side by Sondheim**

Shows: March 25-27

**The Producers**

Auditions: March 14-16  
Preview: May 6  
Shows: May 7-9, 13-16, 20-23

Tickets can be ordered online at  
[www.communityplayers.org](http://www.communityplayers.org).  
Click on "Online Ticket Sales."



**Community Players**

201 Robinhood Lane  
Bloomington, IL 61701  
309-663-2121  
[www.communityplayers.org](http://www.communityplayers.org)

**Newsletter Committee**

Jim Kalmbach  
Barb Lemmon  
John Lieder  
Bob McLaughlin  
Sally Parry

We are always looking for writers, artists, designers and story ideas. Send comments and suggestions to [kalmbach@ilstu.edu](mailto:kalmbach@ilstu.edu)

*Curtain Calls* is published six times a year for the voting members of Community Players.

For information about joining us, please contact our membership chair, Barb Lemmon at [barb.lemmon@comcast.net](mailto:barb.lemmon@comcast.net).

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

## The Producers Auditions

One of my fondest memories in college was seeing *The Producers* for the very first time. I remember laughing so hard that I snorted, howled, and had that surreal sensation of being physiologically incapable of keeping a straight face. That was just 40 short years ago. At that time, before VCR's, DVD's and DVR's one had to go to a college campus or an art house to see

*The Producers*. Although screenwriter and director Mel Brooks won an Oscar in 1969 for best original screenplay, *The Producers*, starring the great Zero Mostel and Gene Wilder, wasn't widely distributed, and just barely got financial backing in the first place. It was that Hitler thing. It scared the real producers off, the ones with the money.

In *The Producers* mousey accountant Leo Bloom goes to the office of Max Bialystock to look over his books. Leo theorizes that a Broadway show could make more money as a flop than as a hit. Max seizes upon this idea and convinces Leo to go along with him in his scheme to sell 100% of a show to each of his little old lady investors. Max and Leo set out to find the worst play ever written. They gleefully discover "Springtime for Hitler." Next they hunt for the world's worst director, which they find in Roger De Bris, and then they hire the voluptuous Ulla, who barely speaks English, to answer their phones.

Directed and choreographed by Susan Stroman, the film was successfully brought to the stage in the 2001 musical *The Producers*. A runaway hit, it went on to win an unprecedented 12 Tony Awards, including Best Musical, and Best Original Score, which Mel Brooks also wrote! The original cast recording featuring Nathan Lane as Max and Matthew Broderick as Leo won a Grammy. All this from throwing a pie in the face of the world's most notorious dictator.

It's audacious, it's outrageous, it's *The Producers*! And we at Community Players are so thrilled to be getting a crack at this gem this May. The pay-what-you-can preview is Thursday May 6th at 7:30 p.m., and the show will run for the next three weeks: May 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, and 22 at 7:30, with 2:30 matinees on May 9, 16, and 23.

Auditions are March 14, 15, and 16 at 7:00 at Players. Please come with a prepared song and sheet music, and tap shoes if you got 'em! We are looking 30 actor/singer/dancers from the ages 17 on up (and up), who are also well-endowed with a great sense of humor.

Marcia Weiss - Director

## Board of Governors Announces 2010/11 Directors

The Community Players Board of Governors has announced the directors for our 2010/2011 season.



*Smokey Joe's Café*—Brian Artman  
*Dracula*—Bruce Parrish  
*Art*—Cathy Sutliff  
*John Loves Mary*—Jerry Dellinger  
*Solid Gold Cadillac*—Marcia Weiss  
*Titanic*—Sally Parry

# Side by Side by Sondheim Runs One Weekend

by Bob McLaughlin

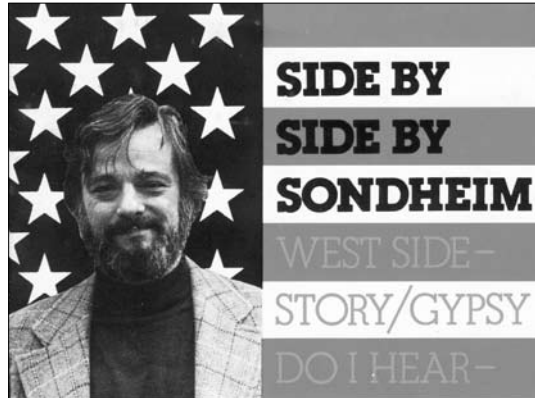
In late March, Community Players will join such arts organizations as the New York Philharmonic, the Kennedy Center, and the Roundabout Theater Company in celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of Stephen Sondheim, Broadway's preeminent composer and lyricist. Players' candle in the birthday cake will be a one-weekend-only presentation of *Side by Side by Sondheim*, a revue of some of the Master's best songs.

*Side by Side* was developed in London in the mid-1970s as a way of introducing Sondheim's work in Britain, where it was not well known. In 1977, producer Harold Prince brought the show to Broadway to celebrate Sondheim's transition from the promising lyricist of *West Side Story* and *Gypsy* and the interesting if off-beat composer of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and *Anyone Can Whistle* to the four-time-Tony Award-winning and *Newsweek* cover-boy composer-lyricist of *Company*, *Follies*, *A Little Night Music*, and *Pacific Overtures*. The revue presents a range of music from these shows and some others, demonstrating Sondheim's ability to create a character with devastatingly funny lyrics and to create a mood with haunting, unforgettable music. Audiences can expect to hear such favorites as "Comedy Tonight," "Send in the Clowns," and "Broadway Baby," as well as some less familiar treasures. There will truly be something for everyone.

Director **Sherise Kirvan** and Producers **Becky and Ted Ichniowski** have assembled the following cast: **Nikki Aitken, Brian Artman, Rae Disco, Bob McLaughlin, Kelly Minter, Chrissy Strong,** and **Kevin Wickart**. **Chad Kirvan** is Music Director, **Brian Feldkamp** is Accompanist, **Sally Parry** is Assistant Director, **Mark Wright** is Lighting

**Jane Thomley**, who has been featured in many productions and directed frequently at Players is celebrating her 30th year at Metcalf Lab School. John Lieder, Bob McLaughlin and Sally Parry attended the performance of *Alice in Wonderland* at Metcalf February 21, 2010 which Thomley directed.

Designer, **Rich Plotkin** is Sound Designer, **Opal Virtue** is Costume Consultant, **Judy Stroh** is Stage Manager, and **Becky Ichniowski** is House Manager.



*Side by Side by Sondheim* will run Thursday, Friday, and Saturday March 25, 26, 27, at 7:30 p.m. at Community Players Theater.

In connection with the production of *Side by Side by Sondheim*, Community Players will also present a special educational event, "Stephen Sondheim at 80: An Appreciation of Broadway's Greatest Composer." Players regular **Bob McLaughlin** will

take off his singer-actor hat and put on his English-professor hat to explore the ways Sondheim has made use of the musical-theater tradition he inherited and revolutionized it. McLaughlin, who is completing a book on Sondheim's musicals, promises an intellectually invigorating hour. There is also the possibility of birthday cake.

This event will be held on Sunday, March 21, 1:00 p.m., at Community Players Theater, 201 Robinhood Lane, in Bloomington. The event is free and open to everyone.



## CP Treasurer: A Changing of the Guard

by Cathy Sutliff

Last June, after six years on the board **Jason Wiggins** stepped down as treasurer. We owe a great deal of our current financial security to the oversight of Jason Wiggins. The first years that Jason served were rough ones, financially speaking. When he joined the board in 2003 income was slim and the antiquated lighting system had finally died. After much work, Jason was able to secure a \$150,000 loan from CEFCU for a brand new lighting system. He helped guide the board in making some tough financial decisions to keep us afloat, and started systematically applying for grants. Through his stewardship Community Players was able to bring in \$15,000 in grants in 2006 and reduce the loan to only \$28,000 in just six years. He also worked with our attorney, **Tim Leighton**, to restore the tax exempt status for the property, so Community Players no longer pays property tax.

Jason has been involved with Players beyond balancing the books. When he first moved to town in 1995 he saw a CP brochure for the season and the notice for auditions for *Bleacher Bums*. **Bruce Parrish** was the director for that show and was very welcoming to all the auditioners. Jason landed the role of “the nerdy guy” and was highlighted in the review as “being a natural for the part.” In his self-deprecating humor, Jason said he has never been quite sure if that was a compliment or not. Since then he has gone to do all sorts of jobs at the theatre, including directing (*A Few Good Men* and *Beauty and the Beast*), assistant directing, stage managing, and lighting once (Jason: “I was not asked back”).

In September, **Joel Shoemaker** volunteered to become our new treasurer. Originally from Mahomet, IL, Joel moved to Bloomington to take a job at Heartland Bank in 2007. In the fall of 2008 he saw his first Players production, *Steel Magnolias*, and was cast in the show immediately following it, *Guys and Dolls*. Joel says he's been in theatre all his life, and has been a magician since the age of seven. He received his bachelor degree in Elementary Education with a minor in theatre from Eureka College in 2006. One of the things Joel likes about Community Players is the people. He thinks the volunteers here are friendly and always willing to help out where needed.

We would like to thank Jason for his years of dedication and getting us on the financial straight and narrow. And we would like to welcome Joel to the board and thank him for all hours he has put in so far.

## CP Theatre Classes

Community Players has several theatre classes coming this spring. To sign up for classes go to [www.heartland.edu/communityEd](http://www.heartland.edu/communityEd)

*Acting For The Stage: Skills for Performance*

**Matt Dratt**, Saturdays April 3, 10, 17, 24

10 am – 12 noon

Held at Dance and Tumbling Sensations Studio, 801 W. Chestnut St. Bloomington

Whether you're a novice or an experienced actor, this workshop will help refine your skill set and expand your abilities to tackle even the most complex of roles. You'll work individually and in small groups to explore the art of drama and comedy. Finally, you will have an opportunity to perform for class members to be better prepared for auditions and on-stage roles.

*Auditions 101*

**Marcia Weiss**, Saturdays May 8 & 15

Grades 6-8 @ 9 am - 11 am

Grades 9-12 @ 1 pm - 3 pm

Held at Community Players Theatre

Are you interested in auditioning for a summer show? Community Players and Heartland Community College are offering a new and unique opportunity for young people in middle school and high school to learn more about the audition process. Classes have been scheduled just before auditions for local summer shows begin! Students will learn about theatre etiquette, scene work and will practice “cold readings.” There will be a mock-audition at the end of the class.

*Welcome to the Theatre!*

**Judy Stroh, Sally Parry, Jeremy Stiller, and Opal Virtue**

July 12, 19, 26, August 2

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Held at Community Players Theatre

Welcome to the Theatre! There's a seat for everyone. This four-session series will cover the basics of creating a show: from directing to design. Each evening highlights a different aspect to of production starting with an overall introduction to the world of the theatre. Other nights will cover costume design, scenic design and directing. All materials included.