



COMMUNITY PLAYERS

CURTAIN CALLS

Inside this Issue

Titanic Auditions.....2
 CP on the Internet.....3
 90th Aniv. Committee.....4
 2011/2012 Directors4
 Hearing Assistance Update.....4

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March, 2011

The Solid Gold Cadillac Pulls onto Robinhood Lane

by Bob McLaughlin

Classic Corporate Culture is hot. The hit TV show *Mad Men*, about a Madison Avenue advertising agency in the early 1960s, has inspired a part-nostalgic, part-sardonic look back at the style of American business in the post-war boom era of the fifties and sixties: the Organization Man; the WASPy board of directors; the chain smoking; the three-martini lunches; the pre-sexual-harassment-laws secretarial relations. The style has spread to Broadway, where last season's *Promises, Promises* revival reset the show from the late-sixties to the early-sixties and where, as I write, previews are set to begin for a revival of *How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying*. (ISU just presented a production of this corporate-culture send-up as well.)

Not to be outdone, Community Players is offering another classic comedy from the Age of the Boardroom, *The Solid Gold Cadillac*, by Howard Teichmann and George S. Kaufman. Originally opening on Broadway in 1953, the play is set at the General Products Corporation of America (one of those companies that's too big to fail). Having recently said good-bye to Edward L. McKeever, a man who worked his way from the slagheap to the

company presidency and who has now accepted a bureaucratic appointment in Washington, the company is being run by a quadrumvirate, T. John Blessington, Alfred Metcalfe, Warren Gillie, and Clifford Snell, who are more interested in lining their own pockets and bamboozling the stockholders than in running the company productively. Their comfy arrangement gets decidedly uncomfortable when, at a stockholders' meeting, Mrs. Laura Partridge, erstwhile actress and owner of ten, count 'em, ten shares of stock, starts asking embarrassing questions about how the boys are spending the company's money. Someone has the bright idea of co-opting her by hiring her as Director of Stockholder Relations, and thus begins a series of events that shake up life at General Products Corporation.



From left to right, Dave Lemmon, Gary Strunk, Kevin Burke, Tom Smith, Melissa Fornoff.

The Broadway production starred Josephine Hull as Mrs. Partridge and ran for 526 performances. In 1956 it was made into a film, starring Judy Holiday and Paul Douglas. With corporate greed still very much on everyone's mind in the aftermath of the 2008 financial meltdown, *The Solid Gold Cadillac* is as relevant now as it was in the fifties—and still achingly funny.

... continued on page 4.

March - April 2010

Board Meetings

Mar. 8, 6:00 p.m.
April 12, 6:00 p.m.
Community Players Theatre

The Solid Gold Cadillac

Preview: Feb. 24
Shows: Feb. 25-27, Mar. 3-6,
10-12

Titanic

Auditions: March 13-15
Preview: May 5
Shows: May 6-8, 12-15, 19-22



Community Players

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Newsletter Committee

Jim Kalmbach
Aimee Kerber
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

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

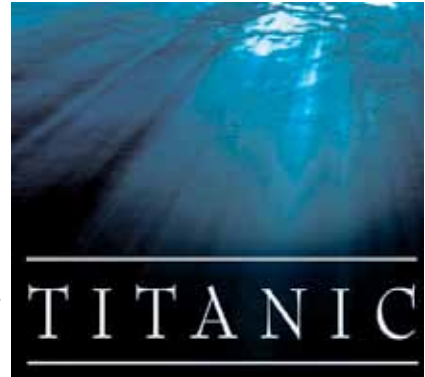
For information about joining us, please contact our membership chair, Aimee Kerber at cplayersmember@aol.com.

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

Titanic Sets Sail

RMS Titanic was the largest ship in the world in 1912. Everyone said that it could never sink; it was evidence that science and industry had combined to create the most perfect ocean-going vessel ever. However, on the night of April 15, 1912, on her maiden voyage, it hit an iceberg and sank, with the loss of 1,517 lives.

The hubris of the creators of the *Titanic* has fascinated people ever since. There have been numerous films about it including a silent film in 1915, *A Night to Remember* in 1957, and the blockbuster *Titanic* in 1997, as well as movies made in Austria, Italy, Germany, and France. When the explorer Robert Ballard and his crew discovered the wreck of the *Titanic* in 1985 and took pictures, interest in this doomed ship blossomed all over again.



How did the tragic and romantic story become *Titanic: The Musical*? Creators Peter Stone and Maury Yeston spent well over a year doing research and creating the large cast of real people such as Captain Edward J. Smith, First Officer William Murdoch, designer Thomas Andrews, Chairman of the White Star Line J. Bruce Ismay, Isidor and Ida Straus (the only first class couple to perish), along with the fictional characters such as three young Irish immigrant girls all named Kate, second class passengers Alice and Edgar Beane, and the stoker Frederick Barrett. The drama of their lives is played out against the tragedy of the ship's sinking. And the music that accompanies it is soaring. It suggests the period with ballads, rags, and magnificent choral numbers. The result was so successful that the musical won five Tony Awards in 1997, including for Best Musical, Best Book of a Musical, and Best Original Score.

Now, nearly a hundred years after the demise of the *Titanic*, Community Players will be presenting the musical. Auditions will be on March 13-15, at Community Players Theatre, beginning at 7:00 p.m. each evening. Performers should arrive at least 15 minutes early to complete an application form. All performers under the age of 18 must have their application form signed by a parent. We are looking for a cast of 30 or more people, men and women, age 15 and older.

Dress comfortably and be ready to learn a dance sequence in a group. For the vocal audition, bring a prepared selection of Broadway music and sheet music. An accompanist will be provided. Please – absolutely no singing *a capella* or singing with recorded music. Scripts will be provided for the reading part of the audition.

Titanic will have its preview on Thursday, May 5. It opens on Friday, May 6 and plays May 6-8, 12-15, and 19-22, with evening performances at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday matinees at 2:30 p.m.

For more information, contact **Sally Parry**, Director, at separry@ilstu.edu, or **Jean Lieder**, Producer, at jean.lieder@gmail.com.

Community Players on the Internet

by Jim Kalmbach

If you are a long time patron of Community Players, you may be used to receiving a variety of print pieces from us, such as our annual mailing with a colorful brochure announcing the new season, a program when you attend a show, and even this newsletter. You may not be aware that the theatre also maintains a presence on the Internet with the help of a number of dedicated volunteers.

The theatre's first foray onto the Internet was to create our own website in 2000. The most recent version of that site (viewable at www.communityplayers.org) went online in the summer of 2006. It was designed by **Stuart Cartwright** and **Bruce Parrish**, and to this writer's eye is very well done. The site is attractive, sensible, and full of useful information. These days the site is maintained by **Cathy Sutliff**. If you have a question about the theatre or our shows, chances are you can find the answer (or who to ask) on our website.

We also maintain an electronic email list of people interested in receiving information about Community Players via their email account. An email list is the digital equivalent of sending out postcard reminders only much, much faster and less expensive. The list, which has over 600 subscribers, is maintained by our membership chair, **Aimee Kerber** (with assistance from **Judy Stroh** who reads much of the email sent to Community Players and forwards it to the appropriate people). Aimee regularly sends out reminders about upcoming shows, auditions, and volunteer opportunities. If you would like to be included on our email list, send Aimee a note at cplayersmember@aol.com.

Our social media czar, **Brett Cottone** along with our Marketing Chair, **Chris Strupek**, maintain a Community Players presence on Flickr, Youtube, Facebook, and Twitter. Although Brett reports that our Flickr and Youtube sites have not been updated for several years, they contain a good deal of interesting material. At our Flickr site (www.flickr.com/photos/communityplayerstheatre/), you will find 200 photographs. At our Youtube site (www.youtube.com/communityplayers/), you will find old commercials and some very nice behind the scenes rehearsal videos.

Chris and Brett currently maintain two social media sites: one on Facebook (www.facebook.com/communityplay-

twitter.com/cpttheatre). Brett does most of the posts while Chris handles calendar updates and uploads new video and other media. Much of the content on the two sites is identical so understanding the difference between the two can be difficult. Twitter is a service for sharing short bursts of information (each "tweet" can be no more than 140 characters). Facebook, the topic of the Oscar nominated film *The Social Network*, offers a chance to share information with friends and fans.

As Brett describes the two sites, "Twitter is a quick short bite of info that usually links back to the Facebook page



The Community Player's Facebook page.

for more detailed information." Our Twitter site offers lots of links in a compact space. Recent tweets include reminders about auditions and show dates and links to online interviews and article about the theatre. Our Facebook site offers longer detailed posts, such as an announcement about next year's season, photo galleries, and updates from current and past Community Players members. Brian Artman used our Facebook site to keep people appraised about the process of applying for staff positions for next year's season. Which site you use is largely a personal preference. If you wanted to pick one to follow, Brett recommends our Facebook page, as it has links to all of the information on other sites as well as the opportunity to interact with other CPers. You don't need to join Facebook or Twitter to visit either of these sites, so take a look and see what you think.

We are indeed lucky to have so many excellent volunteers like Stuart, Bruce, Cathy, Aimee, Judy, Chris, and Brett maintaining our identity on the Internet. The way the world shares information may be changing, but thanks to them, we are doing our best to keep up.

. . . *The Solid Gold Cadillac* preview continued from page 1.

Director **Marica Weiss** has gathered the following cast for Players' production: **Nancy Nickerson** as Mrs. Partridge; **Bruce Parrish** as McKeever; **Dave Lemmon** as Blessington; **Gary Strunk** as Metcalf; **Kevin Burke** (making his Players debut) as Gillie; **Tom Smith** as Snell; **Bridgette Richard** as Amelia Shotgraven, Mrs. P's secretary; **Thom Rakestraw** as Mark Jenkins (and Bill Parker and the Narrator); **Melissa Fornoff** (also making her Players debut) as Miss L'Arriere and Edwina Brook; and **Opal Virtue** as Miss Logan, Estelle Evans, and Little Old Lady.

Producer **Deb Smith** has assembled the following staff: Scenic Designer **Kerry Dixon-Fox**; Master Builder **Bruce Parrish**; Costume Designer **Opal Virtue**; Lighting Designer **Mark Wright**; Sound Designer **Rich Plotkin**; Property Masters **Dorothy Mundy** and **Carol Plotkin**; Stage Manager **Judy Stroh**; and House Manager **Barb Lemmon**.

The Solid Gold Cadillac will offer its Pay-What-You-Can Preview Performance on Thursday, Feb. 24, with regular performances Feb. 25-27, March 3-6, and March 10-12. Evening performances begin at 7:30; Sunday matinees begin at 2:30.



Board of Governors Announces 2011/12 Producers and Directors

On behalf of the Community Players Playreading committee we would like to announce the directors for our 2011-2012 season!

- *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory** - **Marcia Weiss**, Director; **Bruce and Kathy Parrish**, Producers
- Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* - **Cathy Sutliff**, Director; **Deb Smith**, Producer
- *Do Black Patent Leather Shoes Really Reflect Up?* - **Brian Artman**, Director; **John Lieder**, Producer
- *Murder at the Howard Johnson's* - **Dave Lemmon**, Director
- *Hauptmann* - **Opal Virtue**, Director; **Sherry Bradshaw**, Producer
- *Blithe Spirit* - **Tom Smith**, Director
- *You Know I Can't Hear You When the Water's Running* - **Sherry Bradshaw, Brett Cottone, Dorothy Mundy,** and **Joel Shoemaker**, Directors; **Brian Artman**, Producer
- *Hairspray* - **Alan Wilson**, Director

**Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* will be presented as a Theatre for Youth Production, replacing *Annie Get Your Gun*.

Planning Commences for Community Players' 90th Anniversary

As we wind down our 88th season of shows, we are already beginning to plan special events for our 90th season. The Board of Governors has selected **Sally Baugh** to chair the 90th Anniversary Committee. Other committee members are **Aimee Kerber**, **John Lieder** and **Bruce Parrish**, but more members will be added and subcommittees created as the planning progresses.

Things are very much in the initial planning stages at this point and nothing is definite, but fairly solid ideas include

- An picnic or party at the beginning of the season
- A presentation of Players' very first production *Overtures*
- A fashion show featuring items from our costume shop
- A musical revue with some actors reprising their show-stopping numbers
- A big gala event/banquet

In addition, Bruce Parrish is busy updating our history and is preparing a formal presentation featuring many photographs from past shows.

Keep watching this space for future news regarding 90th Anniversary plans. If you have any ideas, you can contribute them to the committee at lieder78@yahoo.com.



Hearing Assistance Update

Our Hearing Assistance program is off to an excellent start. **Rich Plotkin** reports that the hearing pieces were used three times for *Dracula* and four times for *John Loves Mary*. One patron reported that his wife appreciated him not asking "what did they say?" every few minutes.

Using the Hearing-Assistance System, hard-of-hearing patrons better hear and understand the dialogue and music of our productions. Patrons will be loaned a small receiver, about the size of a transistor radio or a mic pack, and an earpiece. A transmitter works through the theater's sound board to deliver the actors' voices to the patron's ear, bypassing background noises and other interference. Patrons wishing to use one should see the House Manager before a performance.

