

## Riveting Hostage Drama, *The Desperate Hours*, Next at Players

By John Lieder

Being the sensitive, 21st century guy that I am, tell me that you want me to watch a two-hour show in which an innocent family is continually threatened, menaced, verbally abused and occasionally physically abused, and I'll probably respond that I would rather watch a Best of Emeril marathon on the Food Network. So, knowing only vaguely what I was in for, I went to the March 2nd rehearsal of Community Players' next production, *The Desperate Hours*, figuring I'd take in just enough of the show to give my dear readers a good teaser and then leave after an hour or so. However, I was soon so involved with the plot and the characters that I had to see it through to the end. And I am very much looking forward to seeing the polished regular performance opening weekend.

The story begins with the Hilliard family calmly beginning their day, but their tranquil life is interrupted with the



Brian Artman, Alexis Wood, Andy Cary and Dana Spies rehearse a scene from *The Desperate Hours*.

intrusion of three escaped convicts, led by **Brian Artman** as Glenn Griffin, with his brother Hank (**Troy Clark**) and partner Robish (**Paul Vellella**).

Not only are these convicts in conflict with the Hilliard family,

they have serious issues with each other and each needs abundant couch time with a psychotherapist. We become absorbed as the head of the Hilliard family, Dan, played by **Andy Cary**, prepares to do whatever it takes to see his family safely through the ordeal. Separately, the police and FBI, led by **Dave Krostal** as Deputy Sheriff Jesse Bard (who has his own history with the escapee, Glen Griffin) try to track down the escapees.

The play is set circa 1955 in suburban Indianapolis. **Jeremy Stiller's** set design and the properties design by **Opal Virtue** and **Sherry Bradshaw** successfully transport us to the era. The set is brightly painted and wallpapered and has multiple levels to take us to the various rooms in the Hilliard household. The stage-left apron is set as Deputy Bard's office. **Mark Wright's** lighting design very effectively serves to segregate these two areas, which is essential because the action con-

tinually ping-pongs from one area to the other. The stage-right apron is used for the few outdoor scenes.



It is evident that director

**Tricia Stiller** has a group of actors who are dedicated to exploring the depths of their characters, and this is a play with some very deep characters. The tension between the characters is at times so palpable you expect that real physical violence will erupt. The tension continually crescendos into the concluding climactic scene, where you finally discover just who gets whom (and whether Brian Artman will get to reprise his death scene from *Deadwood Dick*).

*The Desperate Hours* is being produced by **Jason Wiggins**.

**Gary Ploense** is doing sound and the costume design is by **Cathy Sutliff**. Others in the cast, all of whom deserve their special kudos, include **Dana Spies**, **Alexis Wood** and young **Ryan Cavallo** as mother, daughter Cindy, and son Ralphie, respectively. **Joe Penrod**, **Jason Cook** and **Pete Tenuto** are the other law enforcement officers. **Thom Rakestraw** portrays Cindy's love-interest who wends his way into the conflict. **KC Cox** and **Judy Stroh** also have brief, but crucial, roles.

Because of intense situations and some mild expletives, this show may not be appropriate for pre-teens.

The pay-what-you-can Preview performance is March 9 at 7:30 PM. Regular performances continue through Saturday, March 25 with the usual curtain times at 7:30 on Thursdays, 8:00 on Fridays and Saturdays. Sunday matinees begin at 2:30.

The **Opening Weekend Dinner** is Saturday, March 11, 2006, 4:30 p.m. at Lucca Grill.

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March - April 2006

**Board Meetings**

Sunday, March 12, 6:30 p.m.  
Community Players Theatre  
Elections and end of year  
presentations.  
Community Players Theatre

**The Desperate Hours**

Preview: March 9  
Shows: March 10-12, 16-19, 23-25  
Community Players Theatre

**Opening Weekend Dinner**

Sat., March 11, 2006  
4:30 p.m.  
Lucca Grill

**Oklahoma!**

Auditions: March 13-15



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**Newsletter Committee**

Jim Kalmbach  
John Lieder  
Bob McLaughlin  
Joann Yant

We are always looking for writers,  
artists, designers and story ideas.

Send comments and suggestions to  
lieder78@yahoo.com

# Oklahoma! Auditions

March 31, 1943, is one of those dates that divides history into before and after. It was that night that Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* opened on Broadway and changed the musical theater forever. Before *Oklahoma!*, musical comedies usually offered a series of incidents that provided an excuse for the performers to sing songs and do dances. After *Oklahoma!*, they had plots that motivated the songs and three-dimensional characters who revealed their inner life in song and choreography. Before *Oklahoma!*, musical theater was entertainment. After *Oklahoma!*, it was art.

On one level, the plot is quite simple. Laurey has to decide whom she loves: the high-spirited and hard-to-pin-down cowboy Curly or the somber but devoted Jud. She is helped and hindered in her dilemma by her Aunt Eller, who is experienced, down-to-earth, and wise, and her flighty friend Ado Annie, who is herself torn between two beaux, cowboy Will Parker and traveling salesman Ali Hakim. The love relationships are played out amid the community—farmers and cowboys and their wives and gals—coming together in celebration. But on another level, the play is an exploration of what it means to be civilized, of the process by which blank spaces on the map become ordered and safe, and of what's gained and lost in the process. *Oklahoma!* is the quintessential frontier musical. On any level, it has one of the best scores ever written, including such gems as "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," "The Surrey with the Fringe on Top," "People Will Say We're in Love," and "I'm Just a Girl Who Can't Say No."

Auditions will be 7:00 -10:00 pm March 13 and 14, and 7:00- 8:00 pm on March 15 (with call backs on the 15th from 8:00-10:00 if needed) at Community Players Theatre. Director Penny Wilson will be casting 13 women and 18 men sixteen years and older. Please be prepared to sing an up-tempo song with accompanist (no a cappella or tape/CD please), to dance, and to read from script.



## 2006-2007 Directors and Producers Announced.

Each year the Playreading Committee and the Board of Governors select directors and producers for the new season. This year brought a flurry of applications from dedicated and interested volunteers. Each brought fresh ideas and unique qualifications. Playreading Committee Chair Bruce Parrish and the Board of Governors are pleased to announce the 2006-2007 Directors and Producers:

*Over the River and Through the Woods*

Director: Marcia Weiss  
Producers: Thom Rakestraw and Tom Smith

*Sugar*

Director: Deb Smith  
Producer: Kelli Beal

*Noises Off*

Director: Brian Artman  
Producer: John Lieder

*Inherit the Wind*

Director: Sally Parry  
Producer: Alan Wilson

*Big River*

Director: Joe Penrod  
Producer: Deb Smith

Thanks to the Playreading Committee, Bruce Parrish, Eddy Arteman, Brian Artman, Deb Smith, Tom Smith, Alan Wilson, and Joann Yant for the great imagination and teamwork!

# Another New York Adventure

*Bob McLaughlin and Sally Parry recently had another long weekend in New York City to catch up on their theatergoing. Here's their report.*

**D**iscounting travel days, we had only three full days in New York this time around and so got to see only six plays. We'd hoped to beat our June record of four in a day, but the best we could do this time was three.

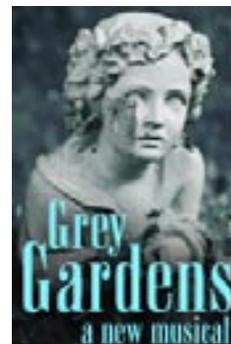
Surprisingly, all but one of the six were Off- or Off-Off Broadway. The one Broadway show was **Sweeney Todd**, natch. Having just done the Community Players version, Bob was deeply impressed that the actors in this revival not only sang the very difficult music and the tongue-twisting lyrics but also played the instruments! But aside from that, we were disappointed. The actors seem to have been directed to play their roles emotionlessly, which created an eerie effect but killed the show's big emotional moments. (Also, Bob thought that the actor playing Judge Turpin could have done quite a bit more with the part; Sally politely agreed.)

We saw two very well done but very different dramas. **The Soldier's Wife** is a revival of a 1944 play by Rose Franken about the awkward homecoming of a serviceman to his young wife, a homecoming complicated by the sudden fame the wife receives after she publishes as a book the letters she wrote to her husband while he was overseas. Since WWII is us, we enjoyed the subtle way the play engaged the anxieties of and about returning soldiers, despite some occasional clunkiness in the narrative. **The Lieutenant of Inishmore** is the latest from the hot, young Irish playwright Martin McDonagh. It's about a rogue IRA man who's lured to an assassination attempt by the murder of his cat, the only living thing he's ever loved. By play's end, the stage is strewn with body parts and spattered with blood. It's the funniest play about terrorism, torture, and dismemberment you're likely to see.

We also saw three new musicals. Least successful, we thought, was **[title of show]**, about two guys who want to write a play for the New York Musical Theater Festival and so write a play about two guys who want to write a play for the New York Musical Theater Festival and so write a play about . . . It's cute, but rarely reaches clever and never gets anywhere near smart. (Editor's note: That's not a typo, "[title of show]" is the actual name of the play, definitely cute.)

**Fanny Hill**, based on the racy eighteenth-century novel, is about an innocent young woman from the country who comes to London and becomes the city's most successful, um, woman of pleasure. The score is pedestrian, but the nine-person cast plays dozens of roles with gusto and the staging is fast-paced and imaginative.

The very best thing we saw was **Grey Gardens**, based on a documentary about two eccentric cousins of Jacqueline Kennedy who, in the 1970s, were living in a run-down mansion filled with garbage and overrun with animals. The first act is set in 1941, when the family and the mansion were flourishing, and establishes the complex relationship between the controlling mother and the rebellious daughter. The second act is set in the 1970s and shows us the same two women trapped in the mansion and with each other. Christine Ebersole gives a bravura performance as the mother in act 1 and the daughter in act 2. Watch for this to transfer to Broadway and be a major player at the Tony Awards. You heard it here first.



Something else fun we did was "Behind the Emerald Curtain: A Behind the Scenes Look at *Wicked*." Two of the actors who have been with the show since it started created this Saturday morning event. We didn't get to go backstage, but we did see displays of costumes and props from the show plus the original model of the set, and the actors talk about what it's like doing the show and answer questions. ("Does anyone ever make a mistake?" "This is Broadway! Nothing ever goes wrong!" Lots of laughter.) It's very interesting for those of us who've done community theater: our shows could be like that if we had \$14 million to spend!

We'll be going back in April. More then.

## Members' Meeting and Elections

The annual members' meeting and the Board of Governors elections are this Sunday March 12th at 6:30 p.m. at Community Players Theatre. Members will choose from the following slate of candidates:

- Treasurer** - Jason Wiggins
- Playreading** - Karen Clark, Sally Parry
- House and Grounds** - John Lieder
- Theatre Tech** - Brian Artman, Gary Ploense
- Membership** - Roland Spies

There will also be several end of the year presentations. The meeting will last approximately an hour. Refreshments will be available.

# Green Room Chatter

A long tradition at Players is to sit in the Green Room when you are not on stage, talking about family, telling stories, reminiscing about past productions, and speculating about future auditions. In this issue, we start a new feature: Green Room Chatter. We have been listening at the door for the past two months, and here are some of the interesting things we learned . . .

It took more than a dozen volunteer workers and over 80 hours of labor, including scraping, sanding, cleaning, taping and painting, but there is now a fresh coat of paint on the house floor. House and Grounds chairperson, **John Lieder**, led the effort, which was done over three consecutive weekends in February. The floor was last painted in 1997 during rehearsals for *My Fair Lady*.



Long time members **Bob McLaughlin** and **Sally Parry** are the authors of a new book from the University of Kentucky Press, *We'll Always Have the Movies: American Cinema during World War II*. Bob and Sally report that they watched over 600 movies in researching the book. Now we know what they do when they are not in shows or visiting New York.



**Cris Christopher, Becky Marcotte, Joe Penrod, and Cathy Sutliff** all had roles in the Bloomington/Normal stop of *Tony 'n Tina's Wedding*.



Ming's Buffet on Hershey Road was the location of the opening weekend dinner for *Deadwood Dick* on January 14. Twenty-four people attended, including Players members, cast and crew of *Deadwood Dick* and friends. A good time was had by all!

If you have an item we can include in next month's Green Room Chatter, please send it to John Lieder ([lieder78@yahoo.com](mailto:lieder78@yahoo.com)).



Next time you use the Bloomington post office parking lot, be sure to check out the Community Players sign on the west side of the theatre. Prairie Signs recently did some maintenance on it, replacing virtually all the old lights, and it really glows now.



**Kiri Palm**, daughter of **Chuck** and **Melody Palm**, has received a Presidential Scholarship from Southern Illinois University – Carbondale and will be majoring in Theatre. The scholarship covers tuition, fees and room and board for four years. Kiri was last seen on the Players stage as a guest vocalist in *Deadwood Dick*. She also appeared in *Gypsy*, *Honk*, *Cinderella* and several others Players productions. Kiri has also been busy backstage at Players, including playing flute in the orchestra for *JC Superstar*, running spotlights and assisting with sound. She is currently a senior at University High School where she has been in several productions, including *The Witch* in *Into the Woods*. Congratulations, Kiri, and best wishes toward your success as a Saluki!



Kiri Palm on her way to SIUC.



Dana Spies took a break from memorizing lines for *The Desperate Hours* to help paint the house floor.



Community Players members enjoying the *Deadwood Dick* opening night dinner at Ming's Buffet.