



COMMUNITY PLAYERS

CURTAIN CALLS

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Vol. 3.2

July, 2007

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat Will Brighten Your Summer

By John Lieder

A list of requirements for the ideal show to put on as a fund-raiser might look something like this: 1) It must have a large cast, preferably with lots of kids who will bring parents, siblings, grandparents, godparents, friends, neighbors, aunts and uncles. 2) The music must be fun and upbeat. 3) The story must be interesting, familiar and flow quickly. 4) It wouldn't hurt for the entire performance to finish in less than two hours. *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* fills the bill beautifully. This summer's Community Players production features 65 actors – over 100 people will ultimately be involved in the production – including a children's choir of about 30 young people. The July 2 rehearsal had more people in attendance than many a mid-winter matinee.

Alan Wilson (Director) and **Wendy Clarenson** (Co-director and Choreographer) have assembled a talented, energetic cast that has totally tuned in to the beauty and fun of the Joseph story. Leading the cast are two actors who, along with being superb vocalists, are wonderful storytellers. **Ben Laxton** (Joseph) has a powerful, crystal

clear tenor voice and infuses youthful enthusiasm, naïveté and angst into the character. **Kathy Taylor** as Narrator totally engages the audience and is the glue that ties the story together. Both Laxton and Taylor know exactly what to do with Tim Rice's lyrics and Andrew Lloyd Webber's melodies. They are surrounded by an adult cast that features some fine individual performers and some outstanding ensemble work. The children's choir is well rehearsed and adds some wonderful exclamation points to the musical numbers.



Space does not permit me to mention all the actors involved with this production. However, I must give special kudos to **Kip Hayden, Jr.** (Naphtali), **Reggie Spears** (Zebulun) and **Scott Meyers** (Pharoah) who, during the June 29 rehearsal, really gave me the giggles with their splendid featured performances. In fact, the entire "brothers" ensemble is a hoot; and the "wives" ensemble complements them wonderfully. Some humorous anachronisms along the way add to the fun.

Bruce Parrish is in charge of set design and construction. The set was a (pardon the pun) "monumental" undertaking, being done in ancient Egyptian motif. It cleverly provides sitting space for the choir and plenty of open space for the many full-cast production numbers—another Parrish masterpiece.



The ladies go gaga for Joseph (Ben Laxton) in Act II.

Continued on page 4....

July - August 2007

Board Meetings

July 10, 6:00 p.m.
August 8, 6:00 p.m.
Community Players Theatre

Joseph

Pay-what-you-can: July 12.
Shows: July 13-15, 19-22, 26-29.

Mr. Roberts

Auditions: July 23, 24.
Pay-what-you-can: Sept. 6.
Shows: Sept. 7-9, 13-16, 20-22.

Don Juan in Hell

Auditions: August 18, 19.
Shows: Sept. 28, 29.

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
John Lieder
Bob McLaughlin
Roland Spies
Joann Yant

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 members of Community Players.

For information about joining us, please contact the membership chair, Roland Spies at roland.spies.gqt9@statefarm.com.

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

Mr. Roberts Auditions

Mr. Roberts is a drama with comic elements by Thomas Heggen and Joshua Logan. The production won the 1948 Tony Award for Best Play. Critics hailed *Mr. Roberts* as "the greatest of war plays." It was also lauded as a superlative comedy.

This rowdy, realistic saga of a group of American sailors aboard a Navy cargo vessel in the Pacific shows the crew suffering from that deadly boredom that is a part of the routine of war. To the ship's company, the skipper is a cantankerous, small-minded man and every one of them conspires against him as the ship pursues its run from Apathy to Tedium and back again. They are on a cargo mission, so little else is going to happen. That Mr. Roberts (a lieutenant) shared the crew's dislike for the Captain was one reason for his popularity. Roberts joined the war to fight; he hates being inactive almost as much as he hates the Captain. Privy to the crew's hijinks against the skipper, Roberts still feels it is his duty to retain some discipline. After winning many ingenious battles against the skipper, Roberts at last wins himself a transfer to combat duty. It was this transfer that cost him his life on a destroyer off Japan.

The cast requires 19 men and 1 woman. For the auditions, which will be at 7 p.m. at the theatre on July 23 and 24, actors will read from the script. *Mr. Roberts* will be produced by **Kathleen Parrish** with **Bruce Parrish** taking the helm as director. The show's performance dates are September 7-9, 13-16, and 20-22, 2007.



Don Juan in Hell to Replace Woman in Black

The Playreading Committee recently announced that, due to scheduling conflicts, George Bernard Shaw's *Don Juan in Hell* will replace the previously announced *Woman in Black* as Community Players autumn, non-subscription lab show.

Don Juan in Hell offers a witty and lively debate on such issues as love and marriage, men and women, life and death, and whether or not there's fire and brimstone in Satan's kingdom. The Nobel Prize-winning playwright was the author of over 100 plays, including *Candida*, *Major Barbara*, *Heartbreak House*, and *Pygmalion*, the basis for *My Fair Lady*.

Co-directors **Sally Parry** and **Cathy Sutliff** will be looking for four adults to

play the following roles: Don Juan, the famous lover from Lord Byron's poem; Dona Ana, a former lover of Don Juan's, who transforms from an old woman to a young one; the Commander, the statue who drags Don Juan to hell in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*; and the Devil, who is, well, the Devil.

Performances will be Friday and Saturday, September 28 and 29, at 7:30.

Auditions will be held Saturday and Sunday, August 18 and 19, at 2:00 in Community Players Theater. For more information contact Sally Parry at separry@ilstu.edu.

We Like New York in June, How about You?

By Bob McLaughlin

From June 5 to 12, Sally Parry and I made our annual trip to New York for the Tony Awards. Not having been to New York since last August, we had a lot of theater to catch up on. In fact, there were more shows we wanted to see than we had time for, and (darn it!) we missed the event of the season, Tom Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia*, which closed in mid-May. Nevertheless, we liked everything we saw, and, unlike some trips, we had no regrets about any of our choices.

Plays (in order of wonderfulness):

We saw *Journey's End*, a revival of R. C. Sherriff's 1928 World War I drama, the day before it closed. Despite excellent reviews and numerous awards, this production just couldn't find an audience. Set in an officers' dugout in the front-line British trenches, the play studies the characters of several men as they prepare for what promises to be an overwhelming German offensive. The performances are excellent, especially Boyd Gaines.

Frost/Nixon is a new play about the resignation of Richard Nixon and TV host David Frost's attempt to line up the first interview with the ex-president. As the interviews are taped, we come to see what's at stake for both men. Frank Langella is outstanding as Nixon, especially in a late-night drunken phone call he makes to Frost where we get a glimpse of the real man's demons.

Gaslight (aka *Angel Street*) is being revived off-off Broadway at the Irish Repertory Theater, starring Brian Murray as the police inspector. This clever psychological thriller remains very effective and is quite different from the famous film version. We're especially impressed by the set, a lush, Victorian drawing room.

Deuce is at best a rough draft of a play by Terrence McNally, about two older ladies, once doubles partners on the professional tennis circuit, now reunited to be honored at the U.S. Open. The saving grace here is that the two older ladies are played by Angela Lansbury and Marian Seldes. It's fascinating watching two old pros do their stuff.

Musicals (in order of splendiferousness):

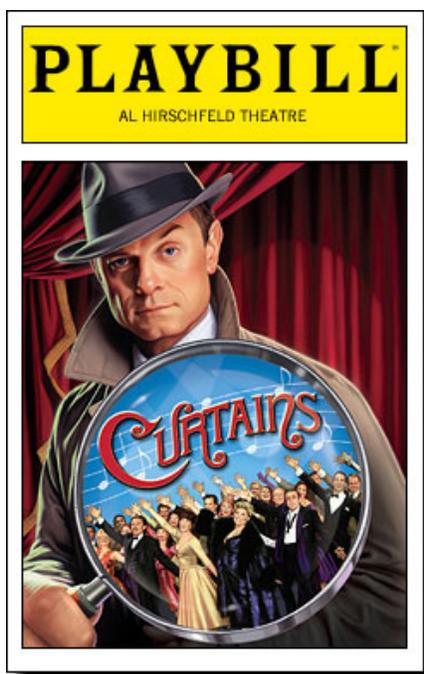
110 in the Shade is an early sixties musical, though you'd never know it from this wonderful revival. The staging gives the story a cinematic fluidity, and the new arrangements give the music a contemporary sound. The cast is excellent, especially Audra McDonald as a spinster who learns that she is someone to be loved courtesy of a flashy, traveling music ma—er, rainmaker.

The revival of Stephen Sondheim's *Company* is staged, like last year's *Sweeney Todd* revival, with the actors playing the instruments. We think that that trick works better in this sleek production as there's less story to get in the way and more chance to show us perennial bachelor Robert learning to join his married friends in making music.

Spring Awakening is the new musical that swept the Tony Awards. It's set in 1890s Germany and deals with a set of teenagers trying to come to terms with their hormones in a culture where any acknowledgment of sexuality is thoroughly repressed. It doesn't end happily. The trick here is that the setting, costumes, and dialogue are period, but the music is rock and roll. The juxtaposition is smart and exciting.

Curtains, a new Kander and Ebb (*Cabaret*, *Chicago*) musical completed after Ebb's death, is set in a Boston theater, where a Broadway-bound musical has lost its leading lady to murder. Detective David Hyde Pierce solves the mystery and the musical's problems. We found this perfectly pleasant, but kind of disappointing considering the on-stage and off-stage talent involved.

The Tony Awards were, as always, exciting. We were seated in the orchestra after a couple of years in the first mezzanine, so we had a lot of great celebrity sightings, including our own **Mariano Tolentino** (who had *much* better seats than we did), one of whose shows, *Little Dog Laughed*, scored big with Best Actress in a Play. It was a great end to an exciting season. We can't wait till next year.



. . . Joseph continued from page 1.

Laurie Combs is in charge of costumes. The “dreamcoat” was designed by **Jami Andre** (mother of children’s choir member **Macy Andre**) and is being sewn by Combs. **Joan** and **Ted Ichiowski** are producers; **Marty Abbott** is orchestral director; **Angie Schwab** is vocal director. Sound design is by **Rich Plotkin** and **Tony Meizelis** is in charge of lighting. The two rehearsals I attended began with **Aimee Kerber** rehearsing the kids’ choir.

Properties are being taken care of via the joint efforts of **Dorothy Mundy**, **Kameron Cox** and **Judy Stroh**. Stroh also is stage manager. **Natalie Chambers** is dance captain, an important role since choreographer **Wendy Clarenson** is also a member of the cast as one of the wives and Mrs. Potiphar, a 15th century B.C. “desperate housewife.”

Two raffles are being held in conjunction with this production. The “Big Dreams” raffle features a grand prize of four one-day park-hopper admissions to the theme parks at Walt Disney World and four other prizes ranging in value from \$90 - \$180. The winners will be chosen and announced at the last performance on July 29. The “Smaller Dreams” raffle will consist of gift certificates and items donated by local merchants and other supporters of the theatre. These prizes will be awarded during intermission of each performance.

The pay-what-you-can Preview Performance is Thursday, July 12. Regular performances are July 13-15, 19-22 and 26-29. Evening performances begin at 7:30 and Sunday matinees commence at 2:30.

The cast performs the “Go, Go, Go, Joseph” number as the pit choir looks on from the front row.



Pharoah (Scott Meyers) shimmies and shakes as he shares his dreams with Joseph (Ben Laxton) in “Song of the King.”



Directors and Producers Announced

Community Players Board of Governors recently announced the following Directors and Producers for the 2007-2008 season:

Mr. Roberts
Director: Bruce Parrish
Producer: Kathleen Parrish

Crazy for You
Director: Alan Wilson
Producer: tba

Fiddler on the Roof
Director: Phil Shaw
Producer: Deb Smith

Father of the Bride
Director: Marcia Weiss
Producers: Jean Lieder
and Sally Parry

The Mousetrap
Director: Penny Wilson
Producer: John Lieder

If you are interested in producing *Crazy for You*, please contact Alan Wilson (awilson@tri-valley.k12.il.us).

