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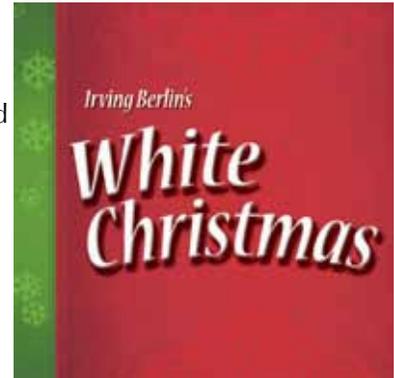
November 2012

Community Players Celebrates the Holidays with Irving Berlin's *White Christmas*

by John Lieder

From 1985 into the 90's, a holiday-themed show was an annual event at Community Players. Some of these productions were of the homegrown variety: geared toward the kiddies and quite fun. It has been awhile, though, since Community Players has done a Christmas show. The last one that qualifies was *Scrooge* back in 2004. What with all the holiday-related festivities going on elsewhere in town, finding artists and especially musicians who aren't already over-committed during December can be quite problematic. However, in celebration of our 90th anniversary, we have decided to give it another go, this time with *Irving Berlin's White Christmas*, which comes onto our stage for the very first time this holiday season.

Based on the 1954 film, *White Christmas* is a holiday romp through some treasured Irving Berlin classics, including, of course, the title song. Leading our version are **Jason Strunk** and newcomer **Ray Rybarczyk** as the song-and-dance team, Phil Davis and Bob Wallace, with **Larisa**



McCoy and newcomer **Lindsey Kaupp** as the Haynes Sisters. **John Lieder** portrays general-turned-innkeeper

Henry Waverly and **Mary Weise** plays his concierge, Martha Watson. Newcomer **Caroline McKinzie** portrays the general's granddaughter Susan with a vocal talent and depth of character that belies her young years. She's a real treat to watch on stage and has been a joy in rehearsal on and off stage.



Also in the cast is a very hard-working ensemble. Each of the following actors portrays multiple characters in addition to their main character: **John D. Poling** plays Ralph Sheldrake, the army buddy to Wallace and Davis who becomes a producer of the *Ed Sullivan Show*. **Alison Lockenvitz** and newcomer **Heather Olson** are a hoot as dancers Rita and Rhoda. **Jay Hartzler** is the frenetic stage-manager Mike and **Joe Culpepper** counters as the taciturn handyman-

The cast, with Jason Strunk, Larisa McCoy, and Joe Culpepper, rehearsing the musical number "Snow".

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Nov. - Dec. 2012

Board Meetings

Dec. 11, 6:00 p.m.
Jan. 8, 6:00 p.m.
Community Players Theatre

Irving Berlin's White Christmas

Preview: Nov. 29
Shows: Nov. 30-Dec. 2, Dec. 6-9,
3-16

Lend Me a Tenor

Auditions: Dec. 10 & 11
Preview: January 24
Shows: Jan. 25-27, Jan. 31-Feb. 3



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Jim Kalmbach
Wendi Fleming
John Lieder
Bob McLaughlin
Bruce Parrish
Sally Parry

We are always looking for writers, artists, designers and story ideas. Send comments and suggestions to kalmbach@ilstu.edu

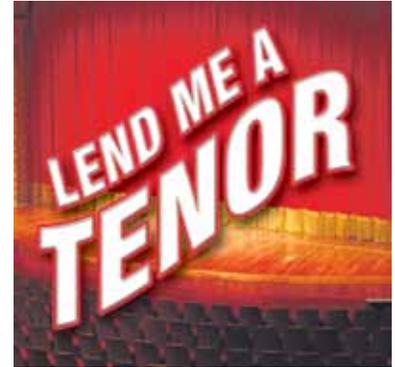
Curtain Calls is published six times a year for the voting members of Community Players.

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

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

Lend Me a Tenor Auditions

Community Players has the perfect antidote for the post-holiday winter blues, it's Ken Ludwig's *Lend Me a Tenor*. This delightful farcical romp opened March 6, 1986 at the Globe Theatre in London's West End. Its Broadway debut was March 2, 1989 at the Royale Theatre. It is 1934 and Cleveland Opera Company Impresario Saunders is preparing for a gala performance of Verdi's *Otello*. He and assistant, Max, a budding *primo uomo* himself, are eagerly awaiting the arrival of their star, *Il Stupendo*, Tito Mirelli, accompanied by his jealous wife, Maria. Enter Maggie, Saunders' daughter and Max's light o' love. She is star-struck by Mirelli and barely notices Max. She writes a gushing fan letter to her fixation, which accidentally falls into Maria's hands. Maria stalks off in high dudgeon, leaving Tito bereft and hysterical. The obvious solution for the star's nervous condition is a little tranquilizer...and a little more, and a little more. Whoops! Now the star of the show is passed out cold.



Could someone lend me a tenor?

Max is forced to step into the breach. When Act II begins, Mirelli has awoken and not realizing the time, has dressed as the Moor of Venice. Max has struggled through the performance and returns, also in costume. Sleep and Desdemona both being murdered, chaos ensues. What follows is an act full of mistaken identities, scantily clad women in compromising situations, and the slamming of six doors as the cast run in and out hiding from one another and the police.

Lend Me a Tenor is directed by **Cris Embree** and produced by **Jay Hartzler**. Auditions are December 10 and 11 at 7:00 p.m. The cast includes four men and four women of varying ages. The men are Saunders, Max, Mirelli and a smart-mouthed bellhop. The women are fiery Maria, star-struck Maggie, diva Diana, and grande dame Julia, the chairwoman of the opera house. *Lend Me a Tenor* previews on January 24 with shows on January 25-27 and January 31-February 3.

If you have any questions, contact Cris Embree at cristanembree@gmail.com



Leaving Iowa Sells Out

Community Players' fall lab show, *Leaving Iowa*, a comedy by Tim Clue and Spike Manton, sold out the house two of its four performances. The show, which ran October 4-7, had the audience on stage for an intimate experience that turned out to be SRO.

The comedy had its roots in the family car trip that we've all taken (and fought over). The play focused on middle-aged writer Don Browning (**Gary Strunk**) who recalls endless road trips with his parents (**Bob McLaughlin** and **Nancy**

Nickerson) and sister (newcomer **Blair Wright**).

Leaving Iowa was directed by **Sally Parry**. The wacky characters Don met on his travels were played by **Dave Krostel**, **Nathan Bottoroff**, **Anne Cook**, **Ellen Losey**, and another newcomer, **Skylar Tempel**. The show was produced by **Dorothy Mundy**, who also served as property mistress. The lighting and sound effects were by **Dan Virtue**, costume design by **Opal Virtue**, **Judy Stroh** stage managed, and **Jean Lieder** was the house manager.

90 Years of Theater:

The History of Community Players, Part 3

by Dr. Wilson Baltz, Tony Holloway, and Bruce Parrish

As part of the celebration of Community Players' 90th Anniversary Season, the Newsletter will offer the history of the organization. Part 1 covered the founding and the first decade. Part 2 looked at the second decade, 1934-1944. Part 3 surveys 1945 to 1958.

As World War II ended, Community Players began a membership drive that would see season-ticket holders increase from 1,025 in 1945 to 1,500 in 1947 to 2,000 in 1948 to 2,260 by the end of the 1950-1951 season.

During rehearsals for *Janie*, the popular war-era comedy about a spunky teenage girl, the cast never rehearsed together, due to illness. In fact, the female lead didn't know until three hours before curtain time if she would be able to perform. One luminary who appeared on the Players stage was Mrs. Don Glasgow, a former dramatic actress with a British company in the Haymarket Theater in London. She also worked with Eva Le Gallienne's legendary Civic Repertory Theater in New York. Another member, former *Pantagraph* play reviewer Jerry Sohl, went on to fame in Hollywood as a film and television scriptwriter.

For the 1946-1947 season, Players scheduled two performances of each show. Another first! *Ten Little Indians*, staged in 1947, marked the first twenty-five years of Players productions. For that show, Joan Saylor (Jobie) Tick fashioned clay Indians around beer bottles. *Indians* was revived in 1993, with Tony Holloway directing, and again in 2011 (under the title *And Then There Were None*), with Cathy Sutliff directing. *Dear Ruth*, a comedy about returning soldiers, opened the 1947-1948 season and was co-directed by C. E. Mulliken and Eula O'Neill. The show went on the road to Chanute Field in Rantoul for a presentation to the servicemen.

William Duell, who played a leading role in 1949's *John Loves Mary* (revived in 2011), later appeared on Broadway in *1776* as well as in the film adaptation. Among his other Broadway shows were *The Threepenny*

Opera, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, and *The Man Who Came to Dinner*. *Good News*, co-directed by Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Mulliken, opened the 1950-1951 season; it was Players' first musical. More than 100 people were involved in the production. Part of the publicity for *Father of the Bride* that season was a wedding announcement in the social column of the *Pantagraph*. In *My Three Angels* Don Freese, who first appeared with Players as a boy of ten, made his first adult appearance, in the role of Alfred, one of the three convicts.

As Players' fourth decade began in 1956, the company was still performing in the Scottish Rite Temple (now Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts). Colene Hoose, after whom the Normal elementary school was named, was president.

The first play of 1956 was *The Solid Gold Cadillac* (revived in 2011). In one scene of the drama *Anastasia* in 1957, a roll of masking tape was found on the sofa by the unsuspecting Jean Smith as the Dowager Empress. She nonchalantly handed the tape to Jacqueline Haviland in the role of a lady-in-waiting and ad-libbed, "Here. Take this with you." Lily Weatherly, who also appeared in *Anastasia*, was the focus of an article in the *Pantagraph*. She managed to perform in at least one show per year with Players from 1936 through 1957.

The final production of the 1956-1957 season was *Tonight at 8:30*, a Noel Coward trio of one-acts. While the reviewer liked only one of the plays, he praised Players for undertaking such a difficult production and encouraged support for the organization. In the 1957-1958 season Players was one of the few groups to obtain the rights for the Agatha Christie drama *Witness for the Prosecution*. Attorney E. William Rolley, who had attended a murder trial in the Old Bailey, the Central Criminal Court in London, assisted with technical advice. The audience for the play served as the jury members.

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The Enchanted Cottage performed on Dec. 11 & 12, 1947.

... White Christmas preview continued from page 1.

cum-stagehand Ezekiel. Rounding out the cast are **Sara Schramm-Bronson** as Tessie, **Skylar Tempel** as Seamstress, **Charles Maaks** as the Conductor, **Ellen Losey** as Assistant Seamstress and three newcomers: **Dava Babin** as Dance Captain, **Nicole Phillips** as Cigarette Girl and **Wendi Ayers** as Marti. Last but certainly not least, **Brian Feldkamp** is our on-stage pianist, Scooter, as well as our regular rehearsal accompanist.

Deb Smith is director, **Bruce Weise** is music director, **Whitney Spencer** is choreographer/assistant director, and **Gary Strunk** is stage manager/assistant director. **Opal Virtue** is costume designer. Handling properties is the triumvirate of **Carol Plotkin**, **Dorothy Mundy**, and **Judy Stroh**. **Dan Virtue** is doing the lighting design and **Rich Plotkin** is doing sound. **Wendi Fleming** is house manager and **Jean** and **John Lieder** are producers.

Kathy and **Bruce Parrish** have designed the set, which consists of two four-sided spinners, two two-sided movable walls and a central elevated stage-within-a-stage. **Charles Maaks** is the master builder. **Dave Fuller** is scenic designer.

The preview performance is November 29 with regularly scheduled performances November 30 – December 2, December 6 – 9 and December 13 – 16. As usual, evening performances begin at 7:30 with Sunday matinees at 2:30.



History Mystery Contest Winner

Congratulations to Chris Terven for correctly identifying last month's mystery photo as *On the Twentieth Century*, from 1990. The actors are, from left to right: Rick Brown, Dennis Curtis, Melissa Beaver, Bruce Clayton, and Stuart Cartwright.

As a prize, Chris received a Community Players 90th Anniversary Season Mug! The History Mystery Contest will appear again next month when you too can win a mug by being the first to identify a new photo.



... Community Players History Part 3 continued from page 3. No secrets were revealed other than the facts as they were presented in the play. It was after this play that Players briefly secured the Esquire Theater in downtown Bloomington. Sadly, the building was condemned and demolished by the city right after the purchase and is now a parking lot next to the Coliseum.

Jack Ingold Obituary

by Bruce Parrish

John L. "Jack" Ingold passed away on November 15, 2012. Jack was a kind and gentle man who always asked, "What can I do for Players?" Over his 50 years with the organization Jack acted, produced, served as a board member, past president and trustee. His first performance was as Bernard in *Death of a Salesman* in May of 1962, our first production in this building. Many years later Jack's final performance was as E.K. Hornbeck in the 1980s production of *Inherit the Wind*.

Off stage, Jack served Players well as a Board member from 1962 through the 1980s and as President from 1970 to 1972. He was selected as a Trustee and served from 1984 to 2000. In 2000 he was selected as a Governor Emeritus, an honorary position given to special members of the organization.

Over the years many Board members have listened to his counsel and advice on the various issues that pop up in the life of a not-for-profit theatrical group. He was a generous actor on stage, a considerate Board member, and a delightful audience member. He will be sorely missed as he attended as many shows as he could in recent years. We would be remiss if we didn't send our condolences to his lovely wife, Ann, and thank her for sharing Jack with us.

Many years ago a tradition was started that the last one leaving the building at night would announce "Good-night guys!" to the empty auditorium as some of us feel the spirit of past Players perform after we've closed up for the night. Now Jack will get to act again among many of his peers and his memorable roles.



A cast photo of Jack Ingold who played Paul Friedman in the Players' 1976 production of *6 Rms Riv Vu*.