



COMMUNITY PLAYERS

CURTAIN CALLS

Vol. 8.7

May, 2013

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Here for a Spell: *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*

by John Lieder

You've all been in one, right? Or at least attended one? I mean the school-wide junior high spelling bee with the winner going on to the county bee. And so you know that the winner more often than not isn't the brainiest kid in the class; rather it's somebody who either studies really, really, really hard or somebody who just has a special knack for spelling. The *25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* is a musical about those somebodies.

And portraying those somebodies on our stage is a group of very talented folks with great voices and marvelous characterizations. Running our "Bee" are Vice Principal Douglas Panch (**Joe McDonald**) and previous Putnam County winner Rona Lisa Peretti (**Aimee Kerber**). Assisting them is ex-convict Mitch Mahoney (**Chris Stanford**), doing community service as the "comfort counselor."

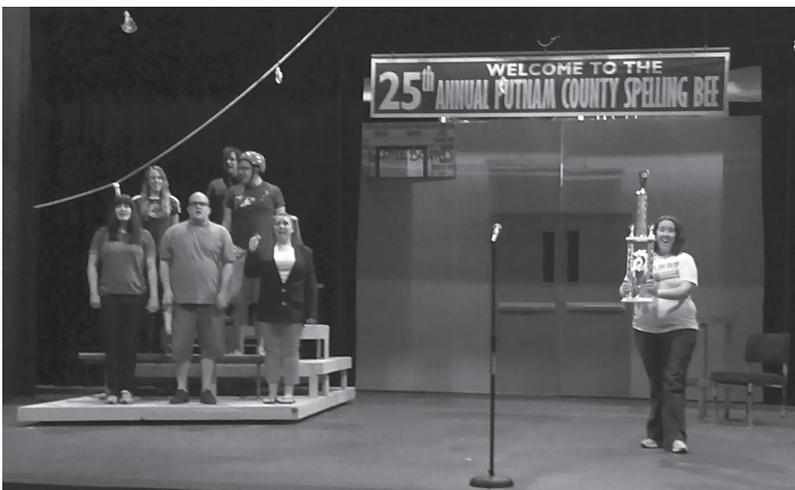
The spellers are an interesting conglomerate of misfits. There is Leaf Coneybear, played by **Austin Travis**, an underachiever, perpetually wearing his bike helmet,

who is somehow able to pull out of thin air the correct spelling of words while in a trance. There is Chip Tolentino, played by **Joel Shoemaker**, the defending champion, who gets distracted by the physical reaction he is having after fantasizing about Leaf's sister. There is the lisping neat-freak Logainne Schwartz and Grubenierre, played by **Kelly Slater**, and a spelling bee newbie, Olive Ostrovsky, played (appropriately) by CP newcomer **Kallie Bundy**. Also competing are overachiever Marcy Park (she speaks six languages) played by another CP



newcomer **Megan Masterman** and William Barfee (played by CP veteran **Brian Artman**) whose unique technique is to spell each word out on the floor with his "magic" foot. These six actors will be supplemented each performance with four spellers chosen from the audience. (Read **Roland Spies'** account of being an audience *Spelling Bee* participant on Broadway in the September 2006 issue of our newsletter: http://www.communityplayers.org/newsletters/news_sept06.pdf.) And there are a few minor characters, mostly parents, which the six spellers portray. And lest I forget, there is even an appearance by Jesus Christ. He's a Hoot.

Continued on page 4 . . .



The cast of *25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* rehearsing the opening number.

COMMUNITY PLAYERS
Calendar

May - June 2013

Board Meetings

May 14 6:00 p.m.
June 11, 6:00 p.m.
Community Players Theatre

Spelling Bee

Preview: May 9
Shows: May 10-12, May 16-19
and May 23-26

Aida

Auditions: May 19-21
Preview: July 11
Shows: July 12-14, 18-21, and
25-28



Community Players

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Newsletter Committee

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.

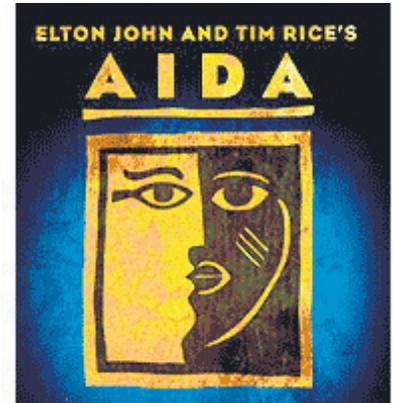
For information about joining us, please contact our membership chair, Wendi Fleming at cplayersmember@aol.com.

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

Aida Auditions

Auditions will be held Sunday through Tuesday, May 19-21, 2013 at 7:00 pm for *Aida*. Those wishing to audition should dress for movement, prepare 16-32 bars of contemporary/pop music for the vocal audition, and be prepared to read from the script. Please bring your sheet music with you, as an accompanist will be provided. Early auditions can be arranged.

Aida is a contemporary musical take on a classic tale of the bond between an enslaved Nubian princess and an Egyptian soldier. As love blossoms between them, they're forced to face death or part forever. Together, they set a shining example of devotion that transcends the cultural differences between their warring nations, heralding a new age of peace and prosperity.



The show, with direction by Alan Wilson, vocal direction by JoLynn Robinson, and choreography by Wendy Baugh, runs July 12-14, 18-21, and 25-28.

The production needs a large cast. The staff also wants to encourage multi-cultural and family casting (Adults 18+ and Children ages 11+). Casting will be done in a colorblind manner. To expand the learning and experience potential of this production, the staff will be casting understudies for multiple roles, and they are planning designated understudy performances for the two Thursday performances (July 18 & 25).

Questions? Contact the Director (Alan Wilson awilson@tri-valley3.org) or the Producers (Chris Terven chris@terven.net or Mark Robinson robinsms@unit5.org).



Report from Community Players Annual Meeting

At the annual meeting of Community Players, several new positions for the Board were approved so that the work could be spread out better among our volunteers. Marketing was divided up into Marketing, Fundraising, and Advertising, Sales, and Public Relations. Theatre Tech has been realigned so that there is now a board position for Lights, Sound, and Effects; Theatre Craft is now Set/Shop and Props, and Costumes is a separate position. Until the rotation is underway, some of the above positions will be one-year terms.

Congratulations to the new members of the Community Players Theatre Board of Governors:

Alan Wilson – Vice President/President-elect;

Rich Plotkin - Lights, Sound and Effects;

Deb Smith - Marketing;

Samantha Smith - Advertising, Sales and Public Relations;

Brett Cottone - Technology;

Kelly Slater - Fundraising;

Opal Virtue - Costumes.

The board approved four new emeritus members, all of whom have been involved in Players for over 25 years, in a variety of positions on stage, back stage, and on the board. The new emeritus members are: **Kathy Parrish, Jane Thomley, Gary Schwartz, and Alan Wilson.**

90 Years of Theater: The History of Community Players (Part 6)

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

As part of the celebration of Community Players' 90th Anniversary Season, the Newsletter has been offering a history of the organization. Part 1 covered the founding and the first decade. Part 2 looked at the second decade, 1934-1944. Part 3 surveyed 1945 to 1958. Part 4 covered the building of the Robinhood Lane theater and moved on to 1968. Part 5 took us up to the winter of 1977.

Five shows were selected for the 1978-79 season, the first time since 1963-64 that Players had attempted so many. The first show was the Victorian thriller *Angel Street* (a.k.a. *Gaslight*). Longtime area printer Bernie Gummerman set the cover of the program by hand, using 100-year-old type. The show featured newcomer Rosemary Luitjens. At the close of the season, Players held an awards banquet, a tradition that had been discontinued many years before.

The second show of the 1979-80 season was *My Fair Lady*, which featured a cast of 35. (*My Fair Lady* was revived in 1997 as part of the 75th anniversary season.) This production had to add a performance due to a citywide blackout. The cast performed several songs from the show under emergency lights until the audience was able to leave the building. L. Jane Thomley was caught in the basement by the outage, and at the time there were no emergency lights for her to find the stairs. Producer Ruth Cobb, using candles purchased from the old Eagle grocery store next door, rescued her. The show finally ran all 14 performances to sold-out houses, including one on Thanksgiving evening. The cast sold bunches of silk violets in the lobby to raise money to repair the leaking auditorium roof.

The next show was *My Three Angels*, which marked Bruce Parrish's directing debut. The set featured a tropical thatched-house motif created by shellacking woven strips of paper grocery bags and stapling them to cardboard and then to frames. The final show of the season was *Godspell*, which introduced the use of an amplified orchestra in the rear of the stage area. Because the proscenium was being replaced, audience members were seated in three-quarter round. After the run, the new proscenium, still being used, was installed to increase stage space.

During the awards banquet at the close of the season, Dr. Wilson Baltz did a slide presentation called "I Foresee a Future," which was the history of Community Players. It was the only documentation Players had until Bruce Parrish began reconstructing the history in 1990, a project that continues to this day.



The cast of *Godspell* from 1979 included Scott Myers, Jane Thomley, and Bruce Parrish

The first show of the 1982-83 season, *Mame*, opened later than usual to accommodate a complete renovation of the restrooms as well as a face lift to the rest of the building. The new box office was built as a tribute to Adele Litt for her many years of service as box office chairperson. The project was financed by H. Dean Litt and family in memory of Adele.

The 1983-84 season went to six major productions: two musicals, two comedies, a drama, and a children's show. For the second show of the season, *Desk Set*, Dan Blake and Paul Dillow built a working replica of the 1950s computer EMERAC. For the third show, *They're Playing Our Song*,

a new tracking system was installed to allow quicker movement for drops or suspended flats. A three-day run of *Androcles and the Lion* was the first Theater for Young People production.

In 1984-85, Players presented the first of its Holiday on Robinhood Lane series. These original scripts featured Broadway favorites and Christmas music over a three-night run. New seats were supposed to be installed prior to *Once upon a Mattress* during the 1985-86 season as funded by the "Buy a Seat" program. Due to reorganizations in the company, the new seats didn't make it on time, so audiences sat on folding chairs. The actual seats still used today arrived a full three weeks after *Mattress* closed.



Historian's Corner

The cast photo for *Calling All Cars* at the Majestic Theatre was taken after the opening night performance on January 18, 1940 at 10:38 p.m. On the back of the photo was written the following: "Outside temperature was 15 degrees below zero." Even in the coldest of weather, the show must go on!

... *Spelling Bee* Preview continued from page 1

One truly does get caught up in the competition, wondering which of these oddballs is going to be the last one standing. It's great fun. Even the players' exits are fun, as they are sung to with the "Goodbye Song" on their way out.

Directing the fun is **Brett Cottone** in his Players' directorial debut, with ample assistance from **Tony Smith**. Music Director is CP newcomer **Dennis Gutkowski**. **Chris Strupek** is the producer. The stage movement is delightfully choreographed by **Wendy Baugh**. Costume design is being done by **Opal Virtue** and **Sherry Bradshaw**. **Dorothy Mundy** and **Carol Plotkin** are in charge of properties. Lighting design is being done by **Dan Virtue**, and **Rich Plotkin** is doing sound design. **Hannah Kerns** is stage manager and **Wendi Fleming** and **Sally Baugh** are sharing duties as House Manager.

The set (designed by **Jeremy Stiller**) consists of a desk, a set of bleachers, and a microphone, with lots of open space for stage movement.

The flyer promoting the show indicates that it is rated "PG13-ish." Indeed. *Spelling Bee* contains some bawdy humor, some political incorrectness, and a few expletives.

The pay-what-you-can Preview Performance is Thursday, May 9. Regular performances are May 10-12, May 16-19, and May 23-26. As usual, evening performances are at 7:30 and Sunday matinees are at 2:30.

Did you know that this will not be the first time that a "Spelling Bee" has been done on the Players' stage? We hosted the *Pantagraph* Grand Final Spelling Bee in 2007 and 2008.



In Memorium: Bob Lovell

Robert Lee "Bob" Lovell, 53, Bloomington, passed away on April 13, 2013 at his home. Bob was active with the Community Players during the 1980s, appearing in seven productions.

Bob's first role was as The Doctor/ Plainclothesman in *Heaven Can Wait* in 1981. He next was seen as Elyot Chase in *Private Lives* in 1983. In his first musical, Bob played Jeff Douglas in *Brigadoon* in 1984, and closed that season as The Narrator/ El Gallo in *The Fantasticks* in 1985. During the 1986-87 Season, Bob was seen as Buffalo Bill in *Annie Get Your Gun* and Carl, the bus driver in *Bus Stop*. Bob's final appearance was as Billy Crocker in *Anything Goes* closing out the 1987-1988 season.

—Bruce Parrish

90th Season Gala

Come join us at the Community Player's 90th Season Anniversary Gala—June 1st, 2013 at the ISU Alumni Center. Tickets are only \$30.00 and are on sale now at the box office and on the Community Players website.

Community Players put on their first performance in 1923 and so our theme for the night is "Step back to when it all began-the Jazz Age."

We have a very special night planned. Cocktail hour will begin at 5:30 pm, and we are pleased to have the Choban/Lane Jazz Duo providing the music for us. They are an excellent local jazz group. Dinner follows and then we will have a special musical performance provided by the 25 Cent Quartet. The Quartet consists of Community Players' performers **Chuck Stuckey**, **Kerry Myers**, **Joe Penrod**, and **Chuck Palm**. They will be performing a selection of songs spanning 1923—2013. You will not want to miss hearing this group. Next the dance floor will open with Sparrow Entertainment helming DJ duties.

We will also have a silent auction, a cash bar, and trivia activities throughout the evening.

So many local businesses have contributed to help make the gala a success that we haven't the space to list them all here, but you can find out more about them at <http://communityplayers.org/event.html>

We are excited to be able to celebrate 90 years of outstanding theatre in our community and would like everyone to come help us celebrate.



2013-2014 Directors and Producers

The Board of Governors recently announced the following directors and producers for the 2013/2014 season:

- *Aida*, director **Alan Wilson**, assistant director **Kelly Slater**, producers **Chris Terven** and **Mark Robinson**.
- *Arsenic and Old Lace*, director **Tom Smith**, assistant director **Joe Strupek**, producer **Chris Strupek**.
- *Spamalot*, director **Marcia Weiss**, producer **Samantha Smith**.
- *It's A Wonderful Life*, director **Sally Parry**, assistant director **Judy Stroh**, producer **Dorothy Mundy**.
- *The Diary of Anne Frank*, director **Opal Virtue**, assistant director **Austin Travis**, producer **Sherry Bradshaw**.
- *9 to 5: The Musical*, director **Brett Cottone**, producer **John Lieder**.
- *The Odd Couple*, director **Jeremy Stiller**, assistant director **Hannah Kerns**, producer **Chris Terven**.
- *Shrek: The Musical*, director **Alan Wilson**, assistant director **Mark Robinson**, producer **Wendi Fleming**.