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November, 2013

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And Now for Something Completely Different...

Community Players Stages *Spamalot*

by John Lieder

My brother and I were big Monty Python fans. We started watching *Monty Python's Flying Circus* before there was cable, when locally you could only get four TV stations: ABC, CBS, NBC and (praise the Lord!) PBS, which carried *Monty Python*. While my brother and I sat watching and guffawing one Saturday evening, I remember Dad walked into the living room, remained standing, watched rather indifferently for several moments and then proclaimed, "Anything resembling seriousness must be purely unintentional."

And so it is with *Spamalot*, Community Players' fall musical. It's a show filled with really nothing but silliness. *Spamalot* is based on the 1975 film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, but there's enough new and different in it to entertain even someone who, if that were possible, had gotten bored after watching the movie for the umpteenth time. There are new characters, new subplots, new anachronisms and, of course new songs. Also inserted are the occasional local references



to bechuckle the audience. And, oh yes, thankfully it has an ending 180 degrees different from the film.

Leading the cast in this production are the loony **Chris Terven** as King Arthur and the lovely **Aimee Kerber** as his faithful sidekick Patsy. The two characters are inseparable and the actors have a delightful repartee. Other members of the Camelot Court are **John Bowen** as the brave Sir Lancelot, **Austin Travis** as the not-quite-so-brave-as-Sir-Lancelot-and-continually-soiling-himself Sir Robin, **Charles Boudreaux** as the Strangely Flatulent Sir Bedevere and **Spencer Powell** as Sir "Dennis" Galahad.



Chris Terven as King Arthur receives a taunting from the French Knight played by Dave Krostel.

An extra special piece of deliciousness in this production is the performance of **Sharon Russell** as the Lady of the Lake. With a remarkably beautiful and powerful voice and a marvelous stage presence, to paraphrase the Monty Python "Oscar Wilde" sketch, she is "like a big jam doughnut with cream on the top. Her arrival on stage gives us pleasure and her departure merely makes us hungry for more."

The strong and very busy ensemble includes several performers with multiple speaking roles. In addition to playing Not-Dead-Fred, **The Rev. Joe Culpepper** "converts" to play Brother Maynard

Continued on page 4 . . .

Nov. - Dec. 2013

Board Meetings

November 19, 6:00 p.m.
December 17, 6:00 p.m.
Community Players Theatre

Spamalot

Preview: Nov. 7
Shows: Nov. 8-10, 14-17 and
21-24

Its a Wonderful Life

Shows: Dec.12-15

The Diary of Anne Frank

Auditions: Nov. 25-26
Preview: Jan. 16
Shows: Jan. 17-19 and 23-26



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

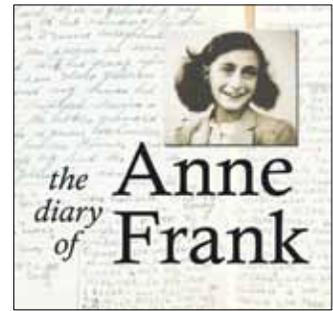
Curtain Calls is published six times a year for the voting members of Community Players.

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."

The Diary of Anne Frank Auditions

Who would have thought a thirteen-year-old girl's diary would become not only one of the great works of world literature but also an unsurpassed testament to the strength of the human spirit in times of darkness? For two years Anne Frank and her family hid in a secret attic in an Amsterdam building, trying to elude the Nazi regime. They were eventually joined by another family. Anne wrote about the personalities of the attic denizens, her isolated life, her dreams, and her burgeoning love for Peter van Pels. After the Franks were discovered, they were shipped to the Nazi death camps: Anne died in Bergen-Belsen in March 1945. Her father, Otto Frank, survived the camps, and, after the war, discovered the diary and had it published, first in France and Germany, then around the world. It speaks as a witness to the horror of the Holocaust and also, paradoxically, inspires a faith in the future. Anne famously concludes, "Despite everything, I believe that people are really good at heart."



Community Players will be holding auditions for the Tony Award-winning dramatic version of Anne's diary, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, revised by Wendy Kesselman, November 25-26, 2013, at 7:00 P.M. at Community Players Theater. Director **Opal Virtue** and producer **Sherry Bradshaw** will be looking for eight men and five women. Performances will be January 17-19 and 23-26, with a Pay-What-You-Can Preview Performance on January 16.

History Mystery Contest!

Due to space limitations, we haven't run a History Mystery photo since the January 2013 issue. Belated congratulations to Dan Virtue for correctly identifying our last mystery photo as *How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying*, from 1999. The actors, from left to right, are: John Wahl, Dave Montague (on platform), Hans Damkoehler, Cortney Munson, Reena Artman, Dani Burrows, Mark Wright (in the air), Amy Wahl, Hannah Hanson, Sherise Kirvan, Dexter O'Neal, Elizabeth Parrish, Gigi Issac, Mariano Tolentino, Jr., and Jim Kalmbach.

As a prize, Dan received a Community Players 90th Anniversary Season Mug! You too can win a mug by being the first to identify this new photo. Extra credit for identifying year and the performers. Answers must be sent via e-mail to rmclaugh@ilstu.edu. The winner and runners up will be hopefully announced in the next issue!



90 Years of Theater: The History of Community Players (Part 9)

by Bruce Parrish and Bob McLaughlin

As part of the celebration of Community Players' 90th Anniversary Season, the Newsletter has offered the history of the organization. Part 8 ended with the 2003 death of Tony Holloway.

February 2004 saw Players perform the classic prisoner of war comedy-drama *Stalag 17* by Donald Bevan and Edmund Trzcinski.

During one rehearsal, this production was blessed with three visitors, Harold Born, Mark Bauman and Gary Simpkins, veterans who offered the actors and staff insight into being in the military. Mr. Born had been a prisoner for six months in both Stalag 2A and 11B. It was during this production that Players began its practice of designating the first performance of every show a Pay-What-You-Can Preview Performance, providing the chance for everyone in the community to experience the joy of live theater.

That summer, Players offered the classic Meredith Willson musical *The Music Man* as a fundraiser to help defray the costs of the newly installed lighting system. This production had a cast and crew of close to 80 people. The production also had the pleasure of using two quartets from the Sound of Illinois Barbershop Chorus. The show raised over \$3500.00 for the Keep the Lights Shining campaign.

The theme of the 82nd Season was "Something to 'C'": all of the shows had the letter "C" in the title. Opening the season was the Alan J. Lerner and Frederick Loewe musical *Camelot*. This show marked the return of Joe Penrod, as King Arthur, after a sixteen-year absence. The popular musical *Chicago* closed the season and introduced *Curtain Calls*, a newsletter that offered directors' insights and information on upcoming shows, future audition requirements, news from the Board of Governors, volunteer opportunities, and other news.

The theme of the 83rd Season was "A Season to Die For," and on August 12, 2005, Players presented *An Evening to Die For*, a murder mystery dinner theatre that was held at the Radisson Hotel as a fundraiser. In November

the company presented Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler's *Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, directed by Kathy Parrish. A very talented group of singers and actors answered the call to become a part of one of the most difficult musicals that Players had ever performed. The first show of 2006 was *Deadwood Dick, or A Game of Gold*, the first old-fashioned

"mellerdramer" Players had done in 60 years. Closing out the season was Players' third production of *Oklahoma!*, with John Lieder and Bruce Parrish reprising their roles from the 1989 production.

In January 2007 Players produced Michael Frayn's off-beat and fast-paced farce *Noises Off*. The unique set shows us first the play from the audience perspective, and then after

the set revolves, act 2 brings the story backstage. Act 3 is the show once more, only now it is a battleground for the actors taking their disagreements to the next hilarious level of fighting.

On January 16, 2007, Dr. Wilson Baltz passed away. Dr. Baltz was a longtime board member, actor, producer, and stage manager. Dr. Baltz had 15 stage roles and was stage manager for five musicals and seven plays. Dr. Baltz was also Players Historian for a number of years in the 1970s. He worked with Tony Holloway and Bruce Parrish to help produce the booklet *Road to Robinhood*.

The 2007 Summer Theater for Young People was the Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. The show was a fundraiser and featured a Dream Raffle that included four one-day hopper passes to Walt Disney World in Florida, among other prizes. The cast totaled 100 actors and musicians. Ben Laxton as Joseph received high praise for both his acting and singing. As of this writing, Ben is in the national touring production of *Catch Me if You Can*. The eleven-night run and the Pay-What-You-Can Preview were all sold out, resulting in a box office of \$37,000.00.



The cast of *The Music Man* from the 2004-2005 season.

... *Spamalot* preview continued from page 1.

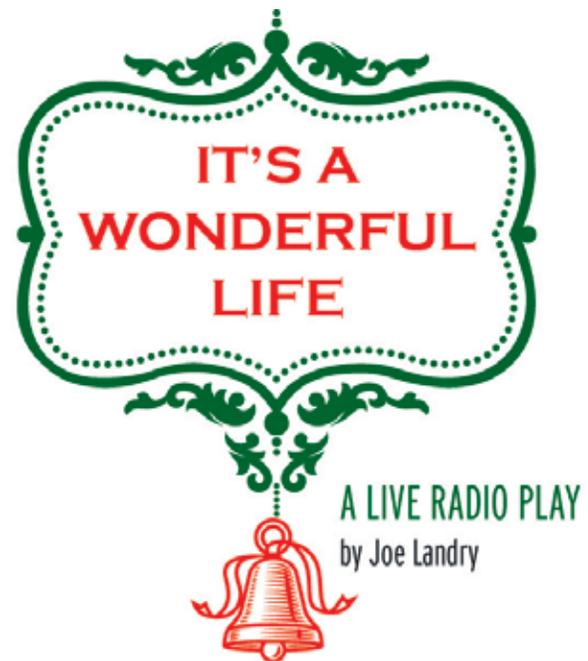
and has other singing and dancing roles. **Dave Krostel** is especially busy, playing a guard, the French Taunter, Knight of Ni and the Black Knight. **Wendi Fleming** portrays Robin's minstrel and the mother of Sir Herbert (played by **Ben Fetters**). **Chuck Palm** is Tim the Enchanter, Sir-Not-Appearing-in-this-Show and Mayor. And (insert fanfare here) Bruce is back! Yes, **Bruce Parrish** is back in town to help with set and appears in the ensemble. For the November 9 performance, Bruce will appear as Tim, Sir-Not-Appearing and Mayor in Chuck's absence. Unfortunately, space does not permit me to list the remainder of the cast, which is a shame, for they all do splendidly, but you can see the full cast list online at communityplayers.org/shows_spamalot.html. After witnessing the October 25 rehearsal, in which the entire cast was successfully "off book," they really have me looking forward to returning for a polished performance.

Marcia Weiss directs this festival in frivolity with help from Assistant Director/Stage Manager **Judy Stroh**. **Tyler McWhorter** is assistant Stage Manager. **Samantha Smith** is Producer. **Melody Palm** is Music Director with assistance from **Lauren Pence** who is Co-Music Director. **Ellen Hagen** is accompanist. (Welcome back, Ellen!) The set, with medieval looking castle-fronts and turrets, has been designed by Chris Terven and is being built by Master Builder **Charles Maaks**. **Katrina Lain** is Choreographer with assistance from **Alex Lovel**. **Tony Meizelis** is doing the lighting and **Opal Virtue** and **Sherry Bradshaw** are sharing duties with the costume design. **Rich Plotkin** is doing the sound design with assistance from **Eli Mundy**. **Carol Plotkin** and **Dorothy Gordish Mundy** are in charge of properties. **Christie Vellella** and **Martha Smith** are managing the house.

The pay-what-you-can Preview performance is November 7, with regular performances November 8-10, 14-17 and 21-24. If you're a fan of Monty Python, the following parental warning should come as no surprise: *Spamalot* contains some "naughty bits," crude language and some pretty blatant political incorrectness and hence is not intended for young children.

Did You Know?

The staff needed for the play *Two for the Seesaw* outnumbered the actors 48 to 2. In the 90 year history of Community Players, there have only been four two person shows: *Two for the Seesaw* in 1969, *I Do, I Do* in 1976 (the only musical), *The Woman in Black* in 2008 and *Oleanna* in 2009.



It's A Wonderful Life Comes for Christmas

It's a Wonderful Life, the classic Christmas film, has been re-imagined as a radio play and will be performed for one weekend only, December 12-15. The audience will be in the house as the studio audience for a "broadcast" of the script with eight actors playing over forty parts.

Director **Sally Parry** and producer **Dorothy Mundy** have an energetic cast of people who will bring to life the script, with the help of music and sound effects. **Thom Rakestraw** and **Hannah Kerns** play George and Mary Bailey, with newcomer **Annie Weaver** as Violet, **Nancy Nickerson** as Mrs. Bailey, **John Lieder** as Joseph, **Bob McLaughlin** as Mr. Potter, **Dave Lemmon** as Uncle Billy, and **John Poling** as Clarence. All the characters, other than George and Mary, will be played by the rest of the cast. **Herb Reichelt** will be the Foley artist, the person responsible for all the onstage sound effects that provide the atmosphere for the show.

Other members of the production staff include **Judy Stroh**, stage manager; **Chris Terven**, scenic design and master builder; **Dan Virtue**, light design and musical sound effects; **Rich Plotkin**, sound engineer; **Cris Embree**, costumes; **Polly McGowan**, costume assistant; **Aimee Kerber**, house manager; and **Gary Ploense**, photographer.