



Family Treat “Cheaper by the Dozen” Opens 2005-2006 Season

by John Lieder

Community Players’ 2005-2006 subscription season will open with the poignant family comedy, *Cheaper by the Dozen*, directed by **Matt Drat** and produced by **Ted and Joan Ichniowski**. Leading the adult members of the cast as the family patriarch, Frank Gilbreath, is **Scott Myers**. *Cheaper* marks Scott’s return to the Players stage for the first time since the musical *1776* in 1998.

He is joined in the cast by **Lisa Ankenbrand** as Mrs. Gilbreath. **Sarah Melton, Genevieve Pilon, Bethany Myers** (Scott’s daughter) and **Jaron Rhoda** have significant supporting roles as the Gilbreath’s oldest children.



Lisa Ankenbrand, Genevieve Pilon, Scott Meyers and Jaron Rhoda rehearse a scene from *Cheaper by the Dozen*.

The audience is welcomed into the Gilbreath family living room (circa 1920), which is adorned beautifully by Set Designer/Master Builder **Bruce Parrish**. The traditional box set has pastel green walls meticulously stenciled by Bruce and his wife, **Kathy**. The set is economic in its use of furniture in order to hold the clan’s nine oldest children. (The youngest children do not appear on stage.) Other members of the production team include **Carolyn Beyer** – costumes, **Dan Virtue** – lights, **Gary Ploense** – sound, **Sherri Scott** – properties and **Julie Wright** – assistant director. **Becky Ichniowski** is House Manager.

Cheaper by the Dozen is based on the book of the same name, which was written by two of the Gilbreath children, Frank Gilbreath, Jr. and Ernestine Gilbreath Carey. In fact, the play begins

as Frank, Jr. and Ernestine, as adults, reminisce about growing up in a large family with an eccentric, world-renowned efficiency expert as a father. Reminiscent of Captain Von Trappe’s signaling for the Von Trappe children in *The Sound of Music*, Gilbreath uses a pipe to summon the Gilbreath children to the family council, where such topics as language lessons, multiplication techniques and bathing efficiencies are discussed. If you have seen the 2003 movie of the same name starring Steve Martin, don’t let that deter you from this production. The plots are almost completely different.



The “pay what you can” Preview is Thursday, September 8. Regular performances are September 9 - 11, 15 - 18 and 22 - 24. As usual, Thursday performances begin at 7:30, Friday and Saturday shows begin at 8:00 and the curtain opens for Sunday matinees at 2:30.

Opening Weekend Dinner

Spend some time getting to know your fellow Community Players Theatre members and the cast of the current production! Each opening weekend we’ll gather for an early dinner, 4:30 usually, at a pre-determined restaurant. Members, their family, and their friends are welcome to attend. This is a pay-your-own-way event.

For *Cheaper By the Dozen*, the event will be held Saturday September 10, 4:30 p.m., at **Famous Dave’s Barbecue**. Your hosts will be John and Jean Lieder. Watch your inboxes for the official invite—if you haven’t gotten it already!

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COMMUNITY PLAYERS Calendar

September - October, 2005

Cheaper by the Dozen

Performances: Sept. 9-11, 15-18, 22-24, 2005
Preview: Sept. 8

Opening Weekend Dinner

Famous Dave's Barbecue
Saturday September 10 4:30 p.m.
RSVP to Joann hstry95@yahoo.com
by Thursday September 8th

Board Meeting

Tuesday September 13 6 p.m.
Community Players Theatre
All members welcome.

Sweeney Todd Auditions

Mon September 12 - Wed
September 14 7 p.m.
Community Players Theatre

Wicked

Member trip to the
Fox Theatre in St Louis
Saturday, December 3 2:00 p.m.
Tickets \$75 each; still available.
Open to Members and their guests.
Contact Joann ASAP if you're
interested. Unsold tickets will be
released to the Fox on September
10th.

2006-2007 Season Announcement Party

Be the first to hear the shows
in the new season!
Thursday, December 15th
Community Players Theater
Additional details TBA



Community Players
210 Robinhood Lane
Bloomington, IL 61701
309-663-2121
www.communityplayers.org

Newsletter Committee

Jim Kalmbach
John Lieder
Joann Yant

Send comments and suggestions to
lieder78@yahoo.com

We are looking for writers, artists,
designers and story ideas. The
deadline for the next issue is
October 19, 2005.



Audition Insights

Our Director Speaks of Sondheim and Sweeney

by Kathy Parrish

SWEENEY TODD—THE DEMON BARBER OF FLEET STREET opened in 1979, and from the first sound of the opening work whistle, I knew this show was unlike any other I had heard on any other record (remember records?). For me it was the equivalent of listening to a train wreck. I wanted to turn away from its harshness but I couldn't. The music kept drawing me back in to listen. I could hear industrial London mixed with beautiful melodies performed by characters who continue to survive in spite of their circumstances.



Immediately I was fascinated with Mrs. Lovett. Who wouldn't be? She is a survivor like many women I have known. She admits her faults (The Worst Pies in London) and tells you of her dreams (By the Sea). She is tender to Sweeney and to Tobias, but a businesswoman making sure she has money to improve her station (God, That's Good).

Mr. Todd is tortured with memories of his wife and child. Wrongfully imprisoned for a crime he didn't commit, he returns to London to seek revenge and justice much like other great figures of literature. Todd yearns to be free of the demons that haunt him—to end the life of Judge Turpin, the man who destroyed his family.

The show is probably best described as a Victorian melodrama operetta because it has all the aspects. The time is 19th century London, reminiscent of Jack the Ripper or Oliver Twist. The characters are a mix of street people, shopkeepers, barbers, charlatans, magistrate, and law enforcement. There are the young lovers who see each other but are kept apart by the young girl's guardian. There are deeper secrets from the past and identities revealed.

Sweeney is a performer's dream: a pinnacle to reach through the difficult music and the interesting characterizations. Mr. Sondheim's score is an operetta where more is sung than spoken with thematic characterizations running throughout. The show has a following of audience members who are well informed of every nuance and note—a fact that the actors are well aware—creating a wonderful energy and vibrancy throughout each performance.

Our cast will have approximately 20 adult performers and the orchestra will be on stage incorporated into the set designed by **Gary Schwartz**. **Mike Wallace** is the musical director and **Bruce Parrish** is the producer.

Auditions

Auditions are September 12-14 at 7 p.m. each night. We will require everyone to bring a prepared piece of music to sing (no acappella or pre-recorded disks). Our show accompanist, **Ellen Hagen**, will be available each evening. If you can't attend each night, I encourage you to come back on Wednesday, after 8. Depending on turnout, however, I may have call backs on Thursday.

Road Trips . . .

Community Players' members love to travel and love to attend shows. This issue, Bob McLaughlin and Sally Parry report on their trip to New York to attend the Tonys and John and Jean Lieder tell about traveling to Macon, MO to see Players' alum Megan Crain perform. **Have you made any similar trips to other theatre venues? Got any news about a Players alumnus?** Drop us a note at lieder78@yahoo.com.

Bob and Sally Return to New York

We had five days this trip, which gave us time to see nine plays, the free Stars in the Alley concert, and the Tony Awards. We also set a new personal record, seeing four plays in one day and in the process, shattering the space-time continuum. Not really, but it did combine a lot of fast walking with a lot of sitting.

Our emphasis was on plays this trip. The revival of **Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf** was outstanding, beautifully acted and emotionally shattering. Among the best dramas we've ever seen. Also wonderful is an off-Broadway play called **Orson's Shadow**, based on something that really happened: Orson Welles directing Laurence Olivier in the first English-language production of Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*. Peter Boyle was in the audience the night we were there, and afterward, the play's author, Austin Pendleton, interviewed Peter Bogdanovich about knowing Welles.

We also enjoyed **Doubt**, the Pulitzer and Tony winning play, about a priest who may or may not have molested a young boy and the battle axe of a nun who tries to bring him down. Fascinating, mostly because of the ambiguity—we never find out the truth. The actors, led by Cherry Jones and Brian F. O'Bryne, were wonderful, and the set, an early 1960s Catholic school, is so authentic it gave Bob the heebie-jeebies. Another really well done revival is David Mamet's **Glengarry Glen Ross**, about the cut-throat world of real estate salesmen. The cast is uniformly excellent, especially Liev Schreiber and Alan Alda, and the set is magnificent. We also saw **On Golden Pond**—nothing surprising as far as the play goes, but James Earl Jones and Leslie Uggums were terrific.

As for musicals, we saw two excellent but very different shows at the off-off-Broadway York Theater. The first was Stephen Schwartz's new musical, **Captain Louie**, based on a children's book about a kid who imagines he flies his toy airplane back to his old neighborhood to visit his friends. It's really cute and charming. The score is very catchy, and the performers, almost all young teenagers, are obscenely talented. Before the show, guest star Alice Ripley read the book to the audience, which is mostly kids, plus me and Sally and Bob Manasco and Dave Montague. The second show was **Thrill Me**, a two-person musical about Leopold and Loeb, the 1920s thrill killers. Very powerful, with an excellent score, great performances, and imaginative direction.

On Broadway we saw the revival of **La Cage aux Folles**, which we enjoyed much more than we expected to. Robert Goulet is smooth and charming and still has a terrific voice. Gary Beach seems to be imitating Nathan Lane, which is fine because we'd rather see him imitate Nathan than be himself. The male chorus was outstanding—at the curtain calls they got the standing ovation. We also saw **Spamalot**, the only thing we were disappointed by. There are some very funny bits, especially toward the end, but there are some pretty dull parts too. A little too much of the movie word-for-word, and the songs tend to have their punch lines at the very beginning and so have nowhere to go.

We also stood for a couple of hours at **The Stars in the Alley** concert. This is held every year on the Wednesday before the Tony Awards in Shubert Alley to promote Broadway theater. Almost every Broadway play is represented and most of the musicals perform a number. Highlights included Kelli O'Hara singing the title song from *Light in the Piazza*, Jesse Tyler Ferguson doing his song from *Spelling Bee*, and Ben Vereen doing an impromptu

"Magic to Do." Numbers from *All Shook Up*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, and *Fiddler on the Roof* (with Harvey Fierstein) make us glad we hadn't bought tickets to those shows.

We ended our trip by dressing up in our best and going to the **Tony Awards**. The show was very enjoyable: the awards got spread around to a lot of different plays, and because there were fewer musical revivals than usual, each musical got more time to present its number. We're trying very hard to repress the memory of Hugh Jackman and Aretha Franklin singing "Somewhere" for Sondheim's 75th birthday. (Steve says, Thanks but where do I return it?) Jackman is at his best during the commercials, singing requests from the crowd and bantering with people from the audience.

We may be making a quick return trip in September. More news then.



Megan Crain Appears at Maples Rep

In early July, members John and Jean Lieder traveled to the Maples Repertory Theatre in Macon, Missouri where family friend **Megan Crain** appeared as Betty Chumley in **Harvey**, Rita La Porta in the musical **Lucky Stiff** and as a reporter in **Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat**.

Megan cut her theatrical teeth at Community Players when at age six she appeared as the youngest orphan in *Annie*, with John as Daddy Warbucks. More recently, Megan portrayed Julie Jordan in last summer's Miller Park production of *Carousel*. This fall she will enter her senior year as a musical theatre major at Milliken University in Decatur.

Out and About . . .

In keeping with our name, Community Players was out and about this past month, promoting the theatre and helping to celebrate community events. On Saturday, July 9, cast members from *The Wizard of Oz* passed out flyers promoting their production at the Sugar Creek Arts Festival while **John Walther** and **Joann Yant** answered questions and passed out season brochures.



Also on July 9, the musical leads from *The Wizard of Oz*, performed a few musical numbers at Barnes and Noble.



On August 20, **Jane Thomley, Kathy Taylor, Kelly Carter, John Lieder, Justine Harris, Penny Wilson** and **Deb Smith** entertained patrons at the Shoppes at College Hills to help promote their grand opening.



Community Players Goes Wicked

Here is a chance to go on your own "road trip" and see a great national touring company at the Fox Theatre in St. Louis, MO performing *Wicked*. Our membership chairperson Joann Yant has secured a block of tickets for the Saturday Matinee, December 3. Transportation to St. Louis is up to you and if there is interest, we will gather for dinner after the show. This event is for community players members and their guests only.

What: National Touring Company of *Wicked*
Where: St. Louis's *Fabulous* Fox Theatre www.fabulousfox.com
When: Saturday December 3, matinee (2 p.m.)
Who: Community Players Theatre Members and their guests
Price: \$75 per ticket

Email Joann at hstry95@yahoo.com to confirm your order. Include your name, your address, your phone number and how many tickets you need. Make out the check for the total amount to Community Players Theatre Send check to Community Players Theater, Attn Joann for The "Wicked" Event, PO Box 1706 Bloomington IL 61701-1706.

If you want to pay by credit card, let Joann know and she will arrange for a time to meet at the theater to run it.

We are hoping that someone will write a nice blurb about this trip for our January Road Trips!

Board of Governors' Changes

Community Players president Alan Wilson has announced two changes to the Board of Governors. Stuart Cartwright has moved to Chicago and resigned as Play Reading Chair. Wilson has appointed Bruce Parrish to fill the remainder of Cartwright's term. Jeremy Stiller has resigned as House and Grounds Chair due to a busy schedule. John Lieder has accepted an appointment to fill the remainder of Stiller's term. Both positions are up for election in 2006.



Marketing Committee Members. Assist our Marketing Chair with campaign design, development, and delivery. Average 5-10 hrs per month. Email Joann (hstry95@yahoo.com).