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Noises Off Going On at CPT

By John Lieder

Noises Off by Michael Frayn is making its way to Community Players' stage, and its hard-working actors may be making their way to the funny farm. Working with Brian Artman on this incredibly difficult, physically demanding and wonderfully hilarious farce is a comically talented cast of Players veterans that is most definitely up to the challenge.

Each of the three acts has its own particular challenges. In Act 1, we witness the misadventures of the cast and crew of the production Nothing On as they hold their final dress rehearsal. The difficulty of this act involves the actors continually coming in and out of character (or rather out of one character and into another) as the director, Lloyd Dallas, played by Bob McLaughlin, stops the action. In Act 2, the set is rotated 180 degrees so that as the cast performs Nothing On, the audience can witness the real drama going on back stage. Act 3 has things totally devolving into chaos as the cast closes out its tour. Every actors' worst nightmares happen in Act 3 as personality conflicts lead to mayhem – missed entrances, missing props, costume problems, etc.

Portraying the cast members of Nothing On are Reena Rhoda as the veteran actress Dotty Otley, Brett Cottle as Garry Lejeune, a man who is always at a loss for words and is romantically tied to the older Dotty, Julie Dawson as the lovely and ditzy Brooke Ashton, Thom Rakestraw as the bumbling, nosebleed-prone Frederick Fellowes, Paige Hubal as the almost always in control Belinda Blair and Dave Lemmon as the hilariously hard-of-hearing alcoholic Selsdon Mowbray. Along with McLaughlin, portraying crew members of Nothing On are Cris Embree as stage director Poppy Norton-Taylor and Players newcomer James Martin as the harried stage hand, Tim Allgood. Each cast member is given their opportunity to amuse the audience, and each delivers. Conquering a challenge at least equal to that of the actors is Jeremy Stiller, set designer and master builder.

Not only has Stiller been required to build eight doors and two levels into the set, but the set also needs to rotate (quickly) 180 degrees so the audience can see what happens backstage in Act 2. Stiller has accomplished this quite nicely by designing a three part rolling set using over 60 casters. The audience will definitely want to stick around during the first intermission so that they can watch the stage crew perform their magic.

Edie Arteman has the task of costuming this cast. This is one show where she can't just worry about what's on the surface, since several actors are caught quite literally with their pants down. Dan Virtue is doing double-duty on lights and sound. Managing the properties is Judy Stroh, with her crack staff of Carol Plotkin and Dorothy Mundy. Judy will also be stage-managing the production. Paul Vellella is Assistant Director. John Lieder is Producer and Jean Lieder is House Manager.

The movie version of Noises Off received a PG-13 rating. Artman has toned down the language a bit and by today's standards, the stage version is fairly tame. However, a few well-placed expletives and much sexual humor remain which make the show inappropriate for young children.

Noises Off opens with the pay-what-you-can performance on Thursday, January 11. Other performances are January 12-14, 18-21 and 25-27. Thursday, Friday and Saturday performances begin at 7:30 and Sunday matinees begin at 2:30.

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January - February 2007

Board Meetings

January 9, 6:00 p.m.
February 13 6:00 p.m.
Community Players Theatre

Noises Off

Pay-what-you-can: Jan. 11
Shows: Jan. 12-14, 18-21, 25-27.

An Evening to Die For

February 16, 6:00 - 10:00 pm
DoubtTree Hotel
Ticket Order Form available
online at www.communityplayers.org
under "Special Events."

Inherit the Wind

Auditions: Jan 22-23
Pay-what-you-can: March 9
Shows: March 9-11, 15-18, 22-24



Community Players

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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.

Inherit the Wind Auditions, January 22 and 23

by Sally Parry, Director

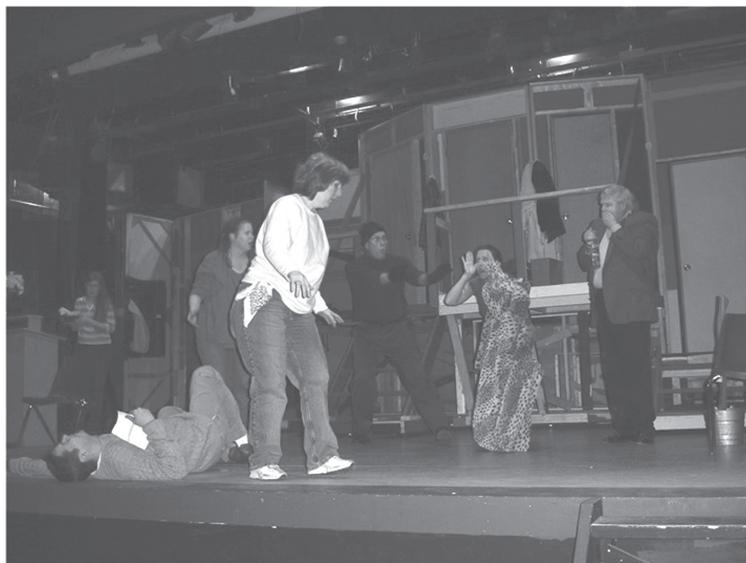
Inherit the Wind is the riveting dramatic version of one of the most notable trials of the twentieth century: the Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925. During that trial two of America's most famous lawyers, Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan, debated a subject still very much in the headlines—Should evolution be taught in the schools?

The play, by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee, is based on these events but goes beyond them in order to foreground ideas about science, education, and "the dignity of the individual human mind." Although the play could be set in the 1920s, Lawrence and Lee note that "The stage directions set the time as 'Not too long ago.' It might have been yesterday. It could be tomorrow." The ideas rather than the time or the place are what are important.

Inherit the Wind was originally performed on Broadway in 1955 and starred Paul Muni, Ed Begley, and Tony Randall. It was made into a movie in 1960 with Spencer Tracy, Fredric March, and Gene Kelly. It has also been filmed twice for television, once in 1988 with Kirk Douglas and Jason Robards, and again in 1999 with George C. Scott and Jack Lemmon. Scott also starred in a Broadway revival in 1996.

We invite you to join a large cast that has room for those who want meaty dramatic parts as well as those who would just like to try their hand at being on stage, but don't want too many lines. All members of the cast will be involved in helping to create the society of the small town where the trial takes place. There will also be an opportunity for some to sing hymns during the show. The cast requires a wide range of ages: approximately 21 men, including one in his early twenties, and five in the 40-60 age range; 6 women, including one in her early twenties and one in her 60s; 2 boys and 1 girl (12-14 years old).

Auditions are Monday, January 22, and Tuesday, January 23, at 7 p.m. at Community Players. Please come 10-15 minutes early to fill out an audition form. The auditions will consist of actors reading scenes together. We look forward to seeing you there.



Backstage mayhem ensues in Act 2 of *Noises Off* as Bob McLaughlin, Julie Dawson, Dave Lemmon, Reena Rhoda, Thom Rakestraw, Paige Hubal, and Cris Embree search for a lost contact.



Central Illinois Theater on the Web

by Bob McLaughlin

While nothing can replace live theater, the Internet offers resources that every theater fan should be aware of. Websites like Playbill.com, Theatermania.com, Broadwayworld.com, and Broadway.com make it possible for even those of us in the middle of Illinois to be au courant with the New York City theater scene. And there are also websites that make it possible for New Yorkers, if they should wish, to keep up with what's going on in the theater world of central Illinois.

Of course, Community Players has its own (excellent) website, as do most of the other theaters and college and university theater departments in the area. But there's one website whose mission is to serve theater aficionados throughout the region: "The Peoria Limelight—The State of the Arts in Central Illinois" (www.peoriatheatre.com).

Don't let the title fool you. The website founder and webmaster **Bob Manasco** isn't one to be pinned down to Peoria in his theatrical activities and neither is his website. Bob has been involved with Community Players as an actor (*1776*, *How to Succeed*, *The Secret Garden*—most recently as Mozart in our staged reading of *Amadeus*) and as a music director (*South Pacific*). But because he's willing to do plays in Bloomington, Peoria, Morton, Galesburg, or Farmington, he found himself, several years ago, wishing that there were a single-source clearinghouse of central Illinois Theater information. As he explains, "There didn't seem to be any good place that consolidated all the information from the various theatres and performing groups in the area, and I wondered how many other individuals had to go through the same process I did, checking ten different websites, and sometimes calling theatres to see what was going on. I hope this site serves its purpose of providing easy access to performance and audition dates and newsworthy theatre tidbits."

Since it went live six years ago, the website has offered a calendar of upcoming performance dates for area theaters as well as a calendar of upcoming audition dates. It also offers local theater news. Bob posts the new seasons of the local theaters when they're announced. His site also sometimes posts cast lists for area productions. Last spring, when the Community Players production of *Oklahoma!* needed addi-

tional men, Bob sent out the call. More recently, he let us know about Broadway actor Euan Morton's visit to a Peoria high school and a show music open mic at the Waterhouse on the Peoria riverfront. Occasionally, he even has quizzes and polls (What neglected shows do you think area theaters should do?).

"Peoria Limelight" also offers a photo archive of local shows, including several Community Players productions. On yet another page, the site offers extensive tips on how to audition for a show—reading, dancing, and singing. The advice ranges from the general ("Relax. Don't panic. Breathe.") to the specific ("Make sure when the choreographer is teaching the steps, you are standing in a place where you can see. Frequently, people uncomfortable with dance try to hide in the back. It doesn't work."). There's even a list of good audition songs, broken down into categories (classic ballad, comedy songs, etc.) and linked to Sheetmusicplus.com so one can purchase them.

Yes, there are links, too, to each area theater's website, to theatrical and music supply sites, to licensing agencies, to local performers' sites, and to various fan sites.

Bob hopes that everyone in the central Illinois theater community will make use of his site as a resource for information and as a way to spread our news. Drop in any time.

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Peoria Limelight - Peoria/Bloomington Theatre". The website has a dark red header with the title "The Peoria Limelight" and the subtitle "The 'State of the Arts' in Central Illinois". A navigation menu on the left includes links for Home Page, Theatre Calendar, Audition Callboard, Photo Archives, Audition Tips, Theatre Links, About Me, and Email Bob. A central banner for "imagei.net - PeoriaTheatre.com" features a "Headshot Special" in large yellow text. Below the banner, a welcome message states: "Welcome to the Peoria Limelight. This site is devoted to supporting the performing arts in the Peoria and Bloomington-Normal area." A section titled "Upcoming events:" lists several theater productions with their dates and venues, including *Beside Manners*, *Vanishing Points*, *Do Black Patent Leather Shoes Really Reflect Up?*, *Sugar (Some Like It Hot)*, *Angels in America: Millenium Approches*, *Morning's at Seven*, *Blood Wedding*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *A Christmas Story*, *Hopeless Spinning*, and *The Nutcracker*. A small advertisement for "THE LATEST HITS BROADWAY SHEET MUSIC" from sheetmusicplus.com is visible in the bottom left corner, showing a book cover for "The Apple Tree" priced at \$11.96 with a 20% discount. A footer note says "(Check out the [Central Illinois Theatre Calendar](#) for more!)"

Another...Evening to Die For!

by Jason Wiggins

In August of 2005, Community Players staged a murder mystery dinner theatre at the DoubleTree (formerly the Radisson Hotel). This fundraising event was a huge success, selling out and raising over \$8,000 for the theatre. When the Fundraising Committee met to plan events for the 2006-2007 Season the idea of a Valentine's Day murder mystery event hit the mark. **Susan Wiggins** will again lead the committee organizing the event, and commented that "Besides being a fun evening that was a financial success we also reached a brand new crowd with the last murder mystery. Over 50% of the audience had never been to a Community Players production before. It was an unexpected surprise that we hope to repeat."



The evening will include a chance for the audience to practice their detective skills as they visit with the suspects during dessert. Besides just being a fun evening there are also prizes up for grabs. For those who pick the right killer, there is a chance to win two round trip tickets from Peoria to Tampa, Florida, courtesy of Allegiant Air. "As we move into the dead of winter that trip sounds better and better and just in time for Spring Break," added Susan. Other prizes will also be raffled off even if you select the wrong suspect. Susan also stressed that "We are so fortunate to have the support of Allegiant Air and other great organizations around the Bloomington-Normal area. They always help to make these events a hit."

Although the setup will be similar to the 2005 event, this production is brand new with the evening's theme running around Valentine's Day. Scheduled for Friday, February 16th, this is the perfect answer to finding something new and different to do with your special someone for Valentine's Day. The evening will begin with a cocktail hour featuring appetizers and romantic music. After the delicious sit down dinner the show begins with *Death and Chocolates*, a murder mystery written by Community Players' own **Dan Horn**.

Tickets are on sale now and again are expected to sell out. The \$50 ticket includes appetizers, dinner, dessert and the show. The money raised by this event will be used to support the free tickets given to students attending the school performances of *Inherit the Wind* and *Big River*.

INFORMATION

Friday, February 16, 2007
6:00 - 10:00 pm
DoubleTree Hotel and Conference Center
Ticket Order Form available online at
www.communitypayers.org under "Special Events"

Production Team

Dan Horn, Neal MacDonald, Justin Palm, Carol Plotkin, Rich Plotkin, Carol Scott, Melissa Shrader, Jim Splittstoesser, Rebekah Strauss, Cathy Sutliff, Jason Wiggins

Committee

Susan Wiggins, Jean Lieder, Caroline Mathon, Donna Anhalt

"One of the original missions of Community Players was to produce original works, and the murder mystery is allowing us to bring a focus back to that purpose," added Susan Wiggins. The McLean County Arts Center agreed and awarded Community Players a grant through the Illinois Arts Council to have this original script written by Dan and produced as a part of this event. Writing isn't new to Dan. What started out as a hobby continues to grow into more of a profession. Dan co-authors an internationally recognized website devoted to literary and film criticism (www.inchoatus.com). "I don't make any money doing this, but sometimes authors, even famous ones, will ask us to review their new books. It's rather nice getting free, signed copies of book from time to time." Dan also shared his thoughts about seeing something he wrote being brought to life, "Honestly, this is one of the most exciting things I've ever done. And that is really saying something. At the same time, I'm humbled by the experience. This is a tremendous opportunity and I hope to make the most of it."