



COMMUNITY PLAYERS

CURTAIN CALLS

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September, 2007

Introspective Naval Comedy *Mr. Roberts* Begins Community Players' 85th Season

by John Lieder

The World War II Navy cargo ship *USS Reluctant* is the setting for the Tony award winning play *Mr. Roberts*, which begins CP's 85th season. The last months of the war in the South Pacific find our hero, Lieutenant Junior Grade Douglas Roberts (**Dave Lemmon**) as the crew's chief cargo officer. His life is made miserable by the proverbial autocratic, self-ambitious Navy Captain (**Brett Cottone**). Much of the action of the play involves Roberts running interference between the Captain and the crew. Helping Roberts keep his sanity through all this are his good friends Doc (**Bob McLaughlin**) and the mischievous Ensign Pulver (played by newcomer **Erik Decker**). The friendly banter between these three characters is most enjoyable.

The overall tenor of the play is humorous, though it is mixed with serious, poignant, and even intense moments. *Mr. Roberts* was the inspiration for the early 1960's situation comedy *McHale's Navy*, but

this is certainly NOT *McHale's Navy*. Roberts is much more introspective and complex than any character in *McHale's Navy* and there is frequent but generally temperate "sailor talk" that makes the play inappropriate for very young children.



A ship just isn't a ship without a crew, and director **Bruce Parrish** has assembled a fine one. The crew features familiar faces, including **Jim Kalmbach**, **Charles Maaks**, **Justin Palm**, **Chuck Palm**, **Nick McBurney**, **Jason Strunk**, **Kameron Cox** and **Herb Reichelt**. Also making their Community Players' debut are **Arni Alvarez** as Mannion and **Paul Patterson** as an MP and crewman. **Laura Walsh** as Lieutenant Ann Girard is the only female in the cast. **Jeff Ready**, **Gary Thompson, Sr.**, **John Brittingham** and **Steve Patterson** round out the cast.

The multi-level set, designed by **Bruce Parrish** and built by **Paul Dillow** and **John Brittingham**, effectively takes us to the deck and interior of the *USS Reluctant*. A slick scene change brings us to Roberts' cabin. The circular gun turrets at stage left and stage right give an authentic warship look to the set.



Mr. Roberts (Dave Lemmon) talks to the crew about the prospects for liberty at a recent rehearsal of *Mr. Roberts*.

Continued on page 2....

September-October 2007

Board Meetings

Sept. 11, 6:00 p.m.
Oct. 9, 6:00 p.m.
Community Players Theatre

Mr. Roberts

Preview: Sept. 6.
Shows: Sept. 7-9, 13-16, 20-22.

Don Juan in Hell

Shows: Sept. 28, and 29
All tickets \$5

Fiddler on the Roof

Auditions: Sept. 9, 10, 11
Preview: Nov. 1
Shows: Nov. 2-4, 8-11, 15-18

Tickets can be ordered online at
www.communityplayers.org.
Click on "Online Ticket Sales."



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We are always looking for
writers, artists, designers and
story ideas. Send comments and
suggestions to lieder78@yahoo.com

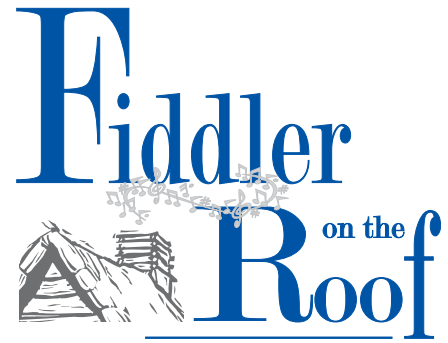
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bers of Community Players.

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 Commu-
nity Players web site. Click on
"Newsletter Archive."

Fiddler on the Roof Auditions

For the second show of our 85th season, Community Players will present one of the world's most beloved musicals—*Fiddler on the Roof*. *Fiddler*, with book by Joseph Stein, music by Jerry Bock, lyrics by Sheldon Harnick, and direction by the great Jerome Robbins, premiered on Broadway in 1964, and by the time it ended its run in 1972, it was the longest running play in Broadway history and had spawned productions around the world.



Director **Phil Shaw** and Music Director **Jennifer Kluchenek** will be casting men and women ages 14 and up and children ages 8-13. Adult auditions are September 9, 10, 11 at 7 pm at Community Players Theatre. Children's auditions are by appointment only (email community.players@verizon.net for an appointment) on Sunday, September 9th. Come dressed for dance. Prepare 16-24 bars of a song. Bring sheet music. An accompanist will be provided. Sorry, no CD's or acapella allowed.

The *Fiddler on the Roof* preview is November 1, while the shows are November 2-4, 8-11, and 15-18



... *Mr. Roberts* continued from page 1.

The rest of the staff includes **Kathy Parrish** (producer and costume designer), **Dorothy Mundy** (Assistant Director), **Dan Virtue** (lighting and sound effects) and **Rich Plotkin** (Sound). **Carol Plotkin** and her crew are gathering props, with careful attention being paid to authenticity. They promise a live goat in the second act.

The pay-what-you-can Preview Performance is Thursday, September 6. Regular performances are September 7-9, 13-16, and 20-22. All evening performances begin at 7:30 and Sunday matinees are at 2:30.

Be certain to check out the display cases in the lobby. Members of the cast and staff have loaned some of their personal effects and souvenirs from their days in the military, including some authentic World War II items. Very interesting!

A Note Concerning Costumes...

To meet our newsletter production deadlines, the preview article must be submitted about ten days prior to opening night. This requires attending rehearsal two weeks prior to opening night to gather information for the article.

An unhappy consequence of deadline is that many of the finishing touches of the production are still in progress and therefore do not get the attention in the preview article that they deserve.

This was certainly the case with *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* as actors were not yet in costume when I attended rehearsal to gather my Preview notes.

Kudos to **Laurie Combs** for the magnificent job she did assembling costumes for *Joseph*. They truly added to the "wow" factor of this production, and a big THANK YOU to all our costumers (and other production staff) for the significant and too often unsung contributions they make to Community Players. — JL

Don Juan in Hell Inaugurates CP Lab

By Bob McLaughlin

Community Players is kicking off its 85th season by celebrating the past and by doing something new. The 2007-2008 season will host the first of what is planned to be an annual Lab show. "Lab" implies "experimental," and that's just what this series hopes to be. It will offer audiences, actors, and staff the chance to expand their horizons a bit with plays that are a little too offbeat or cutting edge for our regular season. They can be dramas, comedies, or musicals, contemporary or classic, but they won't be predictable.

The first of the Lab plays will be the philosophical comedy *Don Juan in Hell*, by Nobel Prize-winning playwright George Bernard Shaw. Shaw was the author of over 50 plays and is considered, after Shakespeare, to be Great Britain's finest, wittiest, and smartest playwright. (Shaw, not one for modesty, thought he was better than Shakespeare too!) His work is constantly being revived and rediscovered. A new production of *Pygmalion* (the source for *My Fair Lady*) is about to open on Broadway, and his *St. Joan* is now a hit in London.

Don Juan in Hell was written as a dream sequence for the middle of the much longer play *Man and Superman*, but it is frequently performed as a separate piece. In fact, 2007 marks the 100th anniversary of its first being performed on its own. Shaw set himself the challenge of writing a new spin on the story of the great Spanish lover Don Juan, who, legend has it, set himself up as enemy to all conventional authority, morality, and custom and even as an enemy to God. No earthly authority could tame him, but after the attempted seduction of one young lady and after he killed her father in a duel, the statue of the dead father miraculously cast Juan into hell. (This will sound familiar from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.)

Shaw imagines Juan, the girl, and the statue—plus the Devil, of course—reunited in hell. Ana, the girl, most newly arrived, is shocked to find that hell is not the storied place of pain and punishment but is, rather, a place for the contemplation of aesthetic and sensual beauty and populated by all the best society. Ana's father, who is so fond of the fine statue of him his daughter commissioned that he's taken its form, was originally sent to heaven, but finds himself so bored there that he is giving it up to move to hell. Don Juan, however, is bored with hell and wants to move to heaven, where, he imagines, he will be able to contribute to the evolutionary process (what he calls the Life Force) that will enable the human race to progress past the sensual to its utopian destiny. The Devil argues for the advantages of hell and is pessimistic that the human race is capable of any kind of progress. The result is the most entertaining dramatic debate on heaven and hell, social custom and nonconformity, and the battle of the sexes ever written.



Edward Mulhare, Ricardo Montalban, Agnes Moorehead, and Paul Henreid in the 1973 Broadway production of *Don Juan in Hell*.

Co-directors **Sally Parry** and **Cathy Sutliff** have assembled a game cast of actors: **Bob Manasco** as Don Juan; **Chad Kirvan** as The Devil; **Judy Stroh** as Doña Ana; and **Bob McLaughlin** as The Statue. The staff includes producer **Dorothy Mundy**; lighting and sound designer **Dan Virtue**; costume designer **Cris Embry**; stage manager **Judy Stroh**; sound operator **Gary Ploense**; and house manager **Jean Lieder**.

Don Juan in Hell will be presented for two performances only: Friday, September 28 and Saturday, September 29 (the weekend after *Mister Roberts* closes) at 7:30 P.M. at Community Players Theater. Tickets are only \$5.00. This production is supported by grants from the McLean County Arts Council and the Town of Normal Harmon Arts Grants.

Magic at the Theatre

by Cathy Sutliff

Community Players plays host to Las Vegas Headlining Magician as Fundraiser.

On Saturday, October 6 be prepared for things to disappear right before your eyes. The magical team of Gary Carson and Kelsey are bringing their touring show *Art of Imagination* to the Community Players Theatre for one night only. This fund-raising event will start at 7:30 pm with a chance to meet the artists after the show. All proceeds from the ticket sales from this show go to Community Players.



Gary Carson and his wife Kelsey have been Las Vegas headliners at the MGM Grand Hotel for over four years. They take their show on the road annually and stop through their tour to help organizations like Community Players. Their show is composed of baffling acts of illusion including levitation, splitting people in half and making a puma appear out of thin air. There will be a chance for audience members to assist in these amazing feats. You can read more about Gary and Kelsey at www.carsonentertainment.com

Tickets are available online now at or at the box office during the run of *Mister Roberts*. Sponsorships are still available for the show. For more information call Cathy Sutliff at 828-7471.

Joseph a Big Success!

by Jason Wiggins

When the Fundraising Committee discussed selecting *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* for the 2007 Theatre for Young People production, there was concern about how well it would perform. The show was first produced at Community Players in 1996 and again in 2000. After two successful stagings, we took a conservative approach when budgeting for how the 2007 version would perform. There was no need for that, as a nearly sold out crowd packed all 11 performances and the "Pay What You Can" performance.

When it was all said and done the box office total was almost \$37,000, which was \$15,000 more than we had hoped for. On top of that, Producers Ted and Joan Ichniowski organized the "Dream Raffle" collecting items from generous merchants around town as well as a grand prize from Walt Disney World. The raffle and items for sale to young people attending the show raised over \$3,000.

The audience response was as impressive as the money the show raised for the theatre. The show is the second highest attended production at Community Players, falling only behind the 1996 version of *Joseph* which had 3 additional regular performances. Another interesting fact is that 42% of those attending the show this summer bought their tickets online, far surpassing any online sales we have experienced before.

The success of this show will soon be a permanent fixture on the Players stage. The Finance Committee was able to approve the purchase of new teaser curtains that run along the top of the stage masking the lighting and sound equipment. We were also able to replace the leg curtains that run along the sides of the stage, and are currently held together by safety pins. Finally we were able to replace the scrim, which was in such disrepair it was not being used.

Thank you to everyone who made this production a success!

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