

COMMUNITY PLAYERS

CURTAIN CALLS

Vol. 5.3

September, 2009



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Neil Simon's *Lost in Yonkers* Opens the 2009-10 Season with "Serious" Entertainment

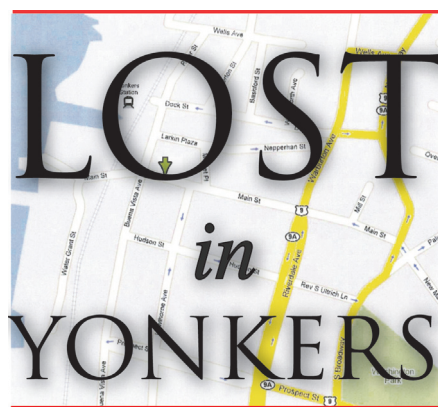
by John Lieder

The past two seasons Community Players has opened with "serio-comedies" *Mister Roberts* and *Steel Magnolias*, shows that make you laugh but also give a workout to your brain cells and emotions. Following that trend, the 2009-10 season opens with Neil Simon's *Lost in Yonkers*. Don't come to see another *Odd Couple*. *Lost in Yonkers* is not that funny, but it is that good—Pulitzer Prize-winning good, in fact.

The show takes place during the World War II years in the Yonkers apartment of Grandma Kurnitz, a German-Jewish immigrant who is as tough as nails. Picture your grandmother on her worst day and that's Grandma Kurnitz, but all of her days are her worst days. You're not going to like her. You are going to like **Kay Mullins'** portrayal of her, though. Living with Grandma is her daughter Bella, whose intellect is arrested at adolescence, but whose heart is mature beyond her years. Bella is in the very capable of hands of Players

stalwart, **Hannah Kerns**. The face-offs between Grandma and Bella promise to provide some fine theatrical moments.

The action is, more or less, centered on the grandsons, Jay (**Dakota McDaniels**) and Arty (**Martin Coughlin**), who have been left with their Grandma while their father travels to earn money to pay off debts incurred during the fatal illness of the boys' mother. The



A Neil Simon play

situations that the boys are put in (such as having to endure Grandma's mustard soup remedy), and their rapport with Uncle Louie (played by **Brett Cottone**) offer many of the show's more humorous moments. Rounding out the cast are **Lisa Ankenbrand** as Aunt Gert and **Kevin Wickart** as Eddy.

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Hannah Kerns, Dakota McDaniels, Lisa Ankenbrand, Martin Coughlin, Brett Cottone, and Kay Mullins rehearse a scene from *Lost in Yonkers*. Photo by John Lieder.

COMMUNITY PLAYERS Calendar

Sept. - Oct. 2009

Board Meetings

Sept. 8 6:00 p.m.
Oct. 13, 6:00 p.m.
Community Players Theatre

Lost in Yonkers

Preview: Sept. 10
Shows: Sept. 11-13, 17-20 and 24-26

Pajama Game

Auditions: Sept. 13-15
Preview: Oct. 29
Shows: Oct. 30-Nov. 1, 5-8, and 12-15

Oleanna

Auditions: Oct. 12-13
Shows: Nov. 19-21

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



Community Players

201 Robinhood Lane
Bloomington, IL 61701
309-663-2121
www.communityplayers.org
my.pantagraph.com/businesses/Community_Players_Theatre

Newsletter Committee

Jim Kalmbach
Barb Lemmon
John Lieder
Bob McLaughlin
Sally Parry

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

Curtain Calls is published six
times a year for the voting mem-
bers of Community Players.

For information about joining us,
please contact our membership
chair, Barb Lemmon at
barb.lemmon@comcast.net.

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

The Pajama Game Auditions

"The Pajama Game is one of the most influential and innovative musicals ever" writes Ken Bloom and Frank Vlastnik in their book *Broadway Musicals: The 101 Greatest Shows of All Time* (2004). Many great Broadway legends had their start in this show including producer Hal Prince, and song writers Richard Adler and Jerry Ross. It also served as Bob Fosse's choreographic debut. A true American classic *The Pajama Game* blends memorable songs ("Hernando's Hideaway," "Hey There," "Steam Heat") with a light-hearted romance constructed around a labor dispute in the Sleep Tite Pajama Factory where the new company superintendent, Sid Sorokin, has developed romantic feelings for union rep Babe Williams. But how smooth can this relationship be when ½ the couple is labor and the other ½ is management? Stay tuned for a fun filled romp as Community Players presents *The Pajama Game*.



There are roles for mature adults, one woman and 2+ for men. The two male leads are baritone, two female leads are mezzo. Many of the characters must be able to jazz/tap dance well. There is also a dance chorus. Most of the major roles (with the exception of Sid and Babe) are comedic, so demonstrating comic ability in the audition is a plus

Auditions are Sunday - Tuesday September 13, 14 and 15 at 7 pm. Auditioners are requested to prepare 16 - 24 bars of music. The show preview is Thursday October 29 with shows on Oct. 30-Nov. 1, 5-8, and 12-15.

Bring sheet music, no CD or a capella. Dress for stretching and movement. Bring dance shoes if possible. **Deb Smith** is the director and **Ben Nadel** is the music director.

For any questions contact Deb Smith at 309-821-9421 or at debsdarb@msn.com.

Raffle Winners

The Fundraising Committee held a raffle during the final two weekends of our summer production of *Les Miserable - School Edition*. Drawings were held at the end of intermission with gift certificates donated by local merchants. There were also two grand prizes award which included two sets of Park Hopper passes to Disney World with airline tickets provided by AirTran and Allegiant Air.

Grand prize winners were Ken Seidl (pictured) of Bloomington and Jim Duehr of Normal. \$1,100 was raised through the raffle. Serving on the Fundraising Committee are John Lieder, Chris Strupek, Barb Lemmon, Mark Kazzaz and Cathy Sutliff.



The New York Scene and the Tony Awards

by Bob McLaughlin

This past June, Sally Parry and I made our usual pilgrimage to New York to catch up on the latest theater offerings and to attend the Tony Awards, our one night of glamour for the year.

Our first brush with the Tonys comes a full week before, when we visit the Signature Theater in Arlington, Virginia, which will receive the Tony for Outstanding Regional Theater. We see the world premiere of Michael John LaChiusa's four-hour (that's not a typo) musical version of Edna Ferber's *Giant*. This is the sweeping story of a Maryland girl who marries a Texas rancher and goes to live with him on his two million-acre ranch. Their relationship is tested by many things: racial prejudice against the Mexican laborers; the growing prominence of oil men over cattle men; their son's lack of interest in inheriting the ranch. The performances are excellent, the songs are fabulous, and the time flies by.

In New York, we see a very satisfying, well-made play, *Accent on Youth*, a revival of a 1933 comedy by Samson Raphaelson, about a playwright who writes a play about an older man in love with a younger woman. Life mirrors art when his young secretary reveals that she is in love with him. Romance and complications follow. David Hyde Pierce is very funny as the playwright.

Our favorite musical is *Next to Normal*, by Brian Yorke and Tom Kitt. Alice Ripley stars as woman suffering from bipolar disorder. It's hard to talk too much about this one without spoiling it, but the musical takes us inside and outside of the woman's mind as her doctors try treatment after treatment, and it traces the effects of her illness on her family. The show is intense, the performances are powerful, and the score is terrific. If you go to New York and can see only one show, make it this one.

Our second favorite musical is an Off-Broadway one: *The Toxic Avenger*. This silly but enormously enjoyable show is about a pacifist environmentalist who discovers that his New Jersey town's corrupt mayor is colluding

with evil corporations to dump toxic waste in the local dump. Two of the mayor's goons beat him up and dump him in a large tank of chemical goo. Rather than killing him, it turns him into a monster, the Toxic Avenger, who goes after the mayor and polluters everywhere in New Jersey and wins the heart of the local blind librarian.



We also see *Hair*, a very good revival—well staged, well performed, lots of energy—but it's very much the *Hair* you remember, very effective in parts, tedious in others. We wonder what it would have been like to see the show forty years ago when the issues it tackles were current. Now, it seems like a museum piece. Warning: if you go to see this, be aware that the cast romps through the house periodically. At the beginning of the second act, I am unhappily pulled from my seat and forced to dance with a hippie girl.

Whatever happened to the fourth wall?

As usual, the Tony Awards are at Radio City Music Hall. We're in the first row of the first mezzanine this year, giving us a bird's-eye view of the celebrities below. In the hour before the broadcast, several awards are given out by two favorites, Brian Stokes Mitchell and Laura Benanti. It's too bad the winners don't get on TV, but even better, they get to hug Laura. The opening number is exciting, with lots of exposure for all the musicals and heavy with star power, including Dolly Parton and Sir Elton John. We're thrilled that Angela Lansbury picks up her fifth Tony—the response from the crowd is matched only by her graciousness in her acceptance speech. We're also glad that longtime favorite performers Gregory Jbara and Alice Ripley win. The musical numbers are generally great (though we think we would have chosen something else from *Shrek* and *Next to Normal*)—and the cast of *Hair* stays in the orchestra! We didn't care much for *Billy Elliot*, but we have such a good time, we don't mind too much that it was the evening's big winner.

These very hectic trips tire us out, but not so much that we aren't eager for the next one.

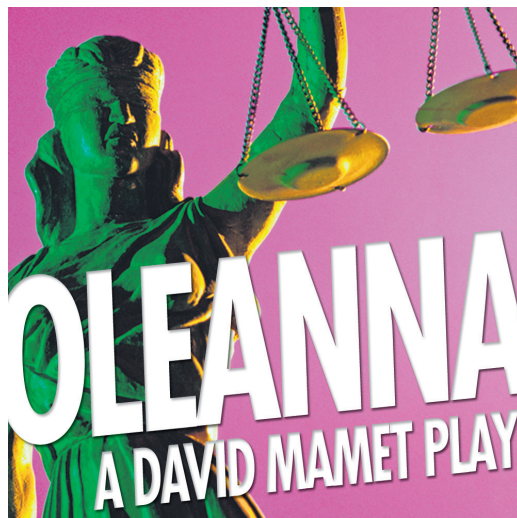
Oleanna Auditions

Can two people experience the same event, have opposing views of it, and both be right? David Mamet's play, *Oleanna*, was first performed in Cambridge, MA, in May of 1992. It opened off-Broadway in October, a year after the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill hearings and according to critic Frank Rich, "is an impassioned response to the Thomas hearings." *Oleanna* is a play about sexual harassment. *Oleanna* is a play about Political Correctness. *Oleanna* is a play about intellectual freedom. *Oleanna* is a play about class struggle. *Oleanna* is a play about communication. If you think everyone in an audience sees the same play, *Oleanna* will challenge that assumption.

The story seems straightforward; a student meets with a professor in his office to discuss her grades and the material being covered in class. We see the entire episode as it unfolds. Acts 2 and 3 challenge our perception of what we just witnessed in Act 1.

Auditions for the Community Players production are October 12 and 13 from 6:00-7:30 pm in the lobby at Community Players. Rehearsals for this production will overlap rehearsals for *The Pajama Game*, as a result rehearsal schedules and venues will be flexible and will probably include weekends. The cast consists of two people, a man, the professor, and a woman, the student. It is a wonderful opportunity for actors to portray beautifully developed characters and demonstrate their own range as performers. If you know any actors who love a challenge, encourage them to audition. Mamet's lack of stage direction leaves the door wide open for interpretation. The show will run for three performances, November 19-21 at 7:30 p.m.

Oleanna is the third lab production in recent years at Community Players following on the heels of last year's highly successful *The Woman in Black* and the previous year's *Don Juan in Hell*. The production staff includes **Dorothy Mundy**, Producer and Props; **Judy Stroh**, Stage Manager; **Dan Virtue**, Lighting and Sound Effects; **Anita Corso**, Set Design and Construction; and **Cris Embree**, Director.



Be a Member!

We'd love to have you as a member of the theatre for the 2009-10 season! For information about member benefits, see our website at <http://communityplayers.org>.

To become a member, fill out the form below and send it with your check for \$20 made out to "Community Players" to:

Community Players Theatre
Attn: Membership Chair
P.O. Box 1706
Bloomington, IL 61702

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-mail Address: _____

... *Lost in Yonkers* preview continued from page 1.

The set is splendidly designed and painted by **David Fuller**, and seemed to be nearly complete when I attended the August 27 rehearsal. Kudos to Dave as well as to **Joe Neal**, who built the set with major help from **Jeremy Stiller** and Hannah Kerns.

Lost in Yonkers is being directed by **Opal Virtue** with assistance from **Carolyn Beyer**. **Sherry Bradshaw** is producer. **Kathy Parrish** is costumer with the dynamic duo of **Carol Plotkin** and **Dorothy Mundy** on properties. **Dan Virtue** is doing the lighting design, **Rich Plotkin** is doing sound and **Wendi Fleming** is house manager. **Jeni Bratcher** is stage manager with crew help from **Kara Sieg**.

The pay-what-you-can Preview performance is Thursday, September 10, with regular performances, September 11-13, 17-20 and 24-26. As usual, all evening performances begin at 7:30 with Sunday matinees at 2:30.