



COMMUNITY PLAYERS

CURTAIN CALLS

Vol. 7.1

May, 2011

Inside this Issue

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
 Auditions2
 Annual Membership Meeting2
 Off-Broadway Treasures3
 CP Member in Play Festival4
 Area Arts Roundtable.....4
 One Stage Together in the Arts4

R.M.S. Titanic Sets Sail May 6

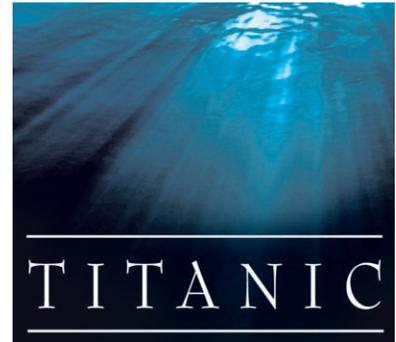
by Sally Parry

R.M.S. Titanic, the storied, unsinkable ship, set sail on April 10, 1912. Millionaires such as John Jacob Astor, Benjamin Guggenheim, John B. Thayer, George Widener, and Isidor Strauss all felt that they should sail on the maiden voyage of the largest ship ever built. Unfortunately, *Titanic* hit an iceberg late on the evening of Sunday, April 14, and sank about three hours later with the loss of 1,517 people, including all the millionaires mentioned above. Only 711 survived. Who is to blame for this has been endlessly debated. As Thomas Andrews, the designer, notes in a song, "I'm just in the business of building, it's God who sinks ships."

The fascination about the *Titanic* did not end with the sinking, but has only increased over time. A number of movies have been made about it, including *A Night to Remember* in 1957 and the blockbuster *Titanic* in 1997. Robert Ballard's discovery of the wreck of the ship in 1985 also created a lot of excitement because it was the first time that the ship had been seen in over 70 years. Subsequently, exhibits of material brought up from

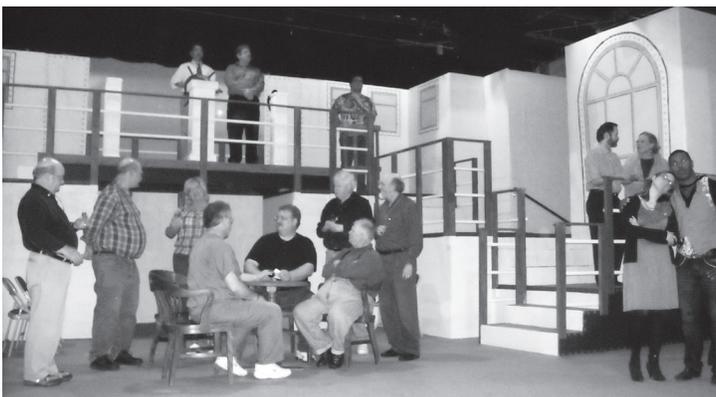
the ship, including personal belongings and dishes, have been shown all over the country.

This Tony-award winning musical looks at some of the passengers on this ill-fated ship: Captain Edward Smith and his crew; the designer, Thomas Andrews; the owner, J. Bruce Ismay; the first-class passengers who spent a lot of money to travel; the second-class passengers who were made up of merchants and small-business owners, and the third-class passengers, mostly immigrants, who were traveling to the new world for a better life. It is the interaction among the various groups that creates the drama of the musical, and provides a powerful vision of society at the time.



Community Players has a direct connection to the *Titanic*. Passenger Sylvia Caldwell (played in this production by **Nikki Lask Aitken**) was travelling with her husband and young son, returning from missionary work in Thailand. They all survived and settled in Bloomington. The Caldwells divorced, and Sylvia started working for State Farm Insurance in 1925, eventually becoming chief secretary to G.J. Mecherle, the company's founder, whom she married in 1944. She was also active in Community Players and appeared in at least two plays. She passed away in January 1965.

Director **Sally Parry** has gathered a fifty-person cast who beautifully sing, first in anticipation of the voyage, and then in despair once the ship



Mrs. Charlotte Cardoza (Wendi Fleming) spars with the millionaires in the First-Class Smoking room.

... continued on page 4.

COMMUNITY PLAYERS
Calendar

May - June 2011

Board Meetings

May 10 7:00 p.m.
June 14, 6:00 p.m.
Community Players Theatre

Titanic

Preview: May 5
Shows: May 6-8, 12-15, 19-22,
2011

**Charlie and the
Chocolate Factory**

Auditions: May 23-24
Preview: July 7
Shows: July 8-10, 14-17



Community Players

201 Robinhood Lane
Bloomington, IL 61701
309-663-2121
www.communityplayers.org

Newsletter Committee

Jim Kalmbach
Aimee Kerber
John Lieder
Bob McLaughlin
Sally Parry

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

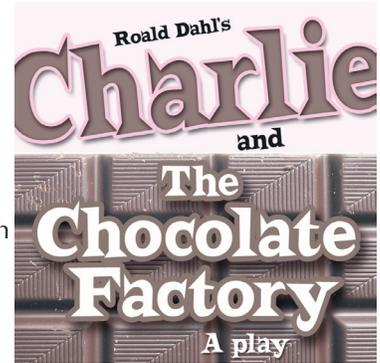
Curtain Calls is published six
times a year for the voting mem-
bers of Community Players.

For information about joining us,
please contact our membership
chair, Aimee Kerber at
cplayersmember@aol.com.

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

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory Auditions

Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is a modern masterpiece. This hilarious work of fantasy fiction doesn't fit neatly into the category of "children's literature", because this morality tale wrapped in a gobstopper of a good story is just as entertaining, unsettling, and delicious to adults as it is to children. Having been made into two major motion pictures, one with Gene Wilder and one with Johnny Depp as Willy Wonka, and being widely read, the story of Charlie is familiar to many.



Chocolatier genius Willy Wonka has devised a contest. He has randomly placed five golden tickets in his Wonka candy bars. Whoever finds a golden ticket gets to visit his factory. Augustus Gloop, Veruca Salt, Violet Beauregarde, Mike Teavee, and Charlie each find tickets. All of the children, except Charlie, get their just desserts when they don't do as they were told on the tour. The unselfish and unspoiled hero of the story, Charlie, is ultimately awarded Wonka's factory because he has proven that he is the most deserving of such an honor.

Community Players is delighted to be presenting Richard George's adaptation of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* this summer. If you have been looking for an acting opportunity for children, this is it!

Director **Marcia Weiss** is seeking a mixed cast of about 20 adults and children to play a variety of roles, from Willy Wonka, to Charlie, to Grandpa Joe, to Veruca Salt, to Mrs. Gloop, to the narrators of the story, and Oompa Loompas, to name a few. Children must be entering 6th grade or older in order to audition. There are no age requirements for adults.

Auditions will be held at Community Players on Monday May 23rd and Tuesday May 24th at 7:00. Previews are July 7, and shows are July 8-10, 14-17.

Those auditioning will be asked to read from the script. Please come early to auditions in order to fill out the required audition forms. For further information, contact Marcia Weiss at mlcweiss@yahoo.com.

Looking for something fantastic to do this summer? Come audition for *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, a show that is sure to be fun for children of all ages!

Board of Governors Announces 2011 Annual Meeting and Election

The annual meeting of Community Players will be held Tuesday, May 10, at 6 pm at the theatre. Items of business include a proposed change to the Constitution to allow absentee voting, reports from various committees, and election of officers.

The slate of nominees for the election is as follows:

For Vice President/President Elect:

Sally Parry and **Alan Wilson**

For Secretary: **Judy Stroh**

For Marketing Chair: **Kathy Parrish**

For Box Office Chair: **Sherry Bradshaw**
and **Kameron Cox**

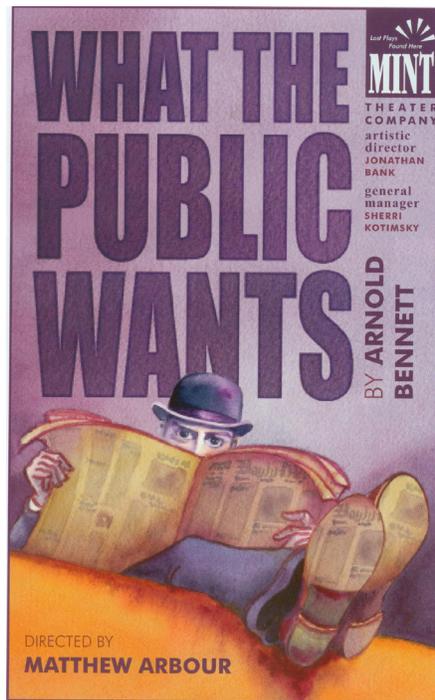
For Theatre Crafts: **Opal Virtue**

Off-Broadway Treasures

by Bob McLaughlin

When those of us who live in the Midwest get a chance to go to New York for a theater outing, our minds usually turn first and foremost to Broadway. We anticipate seeing some long-running hits like *Phantom*, *Lion King*, or *Wicked*, or perhaps we plan to see the new season's likely Tony nominees, *Book of Mormon*, *Catch Me If You Can*, or *Arcadia*. But we shouldn't overlook the multifarious offerings of the Off-Broadway and Off-Off-Broadway theaters—many of them nonprofit, some of them with missions similar to Community Players. On our most recent trip to New York, Sally Parry and I ended up seeing most of our shows at Off- or Off-Off theaters, which present high-quality productions, sometimes with well known performers, but in a more intimate setting (and a considerably cheaper ticket price) than a Broadway theater.

The Mint Theater is located on the fourth floor of a building on 43rd Street, just west of 8th Avenue. Its motto is Lost Plays Found Here, and its artistic director, Jonathan Bank, makes sure that its selections live up to its mission. The theater usually presents plays from the first half of the twentieth century that were hits in their time, but have since fallen into neglect. In March we saw *What the Public Wants*, an early twentieth-century play by Arnold Bennett, a popular British novelist and playwright of the time. It's about a publishing mogul, whose company puts out over 100 papers and whose success is based in his ability to understand what his publics want and to give it to them. But he's unhappy because intellectuals don't take him seriously. He invests in a small theater company (making it profitable but driving away its artistic director) and meets a young woman whom he kind of loves and who he thinks will give him class. The set is gorgeous (there's even a working vintage Dictaphone!), and the performances are excellent. We've seen several other plays here—*The Soldier's Wife*, Hemingway's *The Fifth Column*, and *Susan and God*, by Bloomington's own Rachel Crothers. (If you don't know who she is, check out the photo in our lobby.) The Mint's next production, starting in May, is *A Little Journey*, also by Ms. Crothers.



The Public Theater, one of New York's most famous Off-Broadway theaters, was founded by Joseph Papp with the mission of providing Shakespeare to wide-ranging audiences and to develop new playwrights, directors, and actors. In March, we saw *Compulsion*, about Meyer Levin (who's slightly fictionalized here), the man who was instrumental in getting the *Diary of Anne Frank* published in the United States, and who thought he had a verbal OK from Otto Frank to write the stage version. But the Broadway producers turned down his draft (too Jewish) and brought in Hollywood screenwriters Albert Hackett and Frances Goodrich to write the stage play we're all familiar with. Unable to let it go, he spent the rest of his life obsessing and raging over the slight, suing everyone he could, including Otto Frank (bad PR move). The Levin character here is portrayed by Mandy Patinkin, at his obsessing and raging best. Interestingly, Anne Frank and some other characters are portrayed by oddly expressive marionettes.

The Transport Group, which occupies the top floor of an old office building in Soho, specializes in intimate, visually arresting productions of classic and new plays. We saw *Hello Again*, a musical by Michael John LaChiusa, based on Schnitzler's *La Ronde*. The playing area consists of a bed center, two open areas on either side of it, and the tables we, the audience, are sitting at. The play has ten scenes, each set in a different decade of the twentieth century and each presenting a different couple in the midst of sexual negotiations. The trick is that one character will continue into the next scene with a new partner. The performers, including such Broadway stars as Max von Essen, Alan Campbell, and Nikka Graff Lanzarone, are excellent, and the score is glorious. The audience's tables are part of the playing area, which means that the couples' simulated sex is sometimes enacted right in front of you—Yikes! where do you look?

The Off-Broadway experience can indeed be different from Broadway and is well worth exploring.

. . . *Titanic* Preview continued from page 1

begins to sink. The crew is played by **W. John Lieder** as Captain E. J. Smith, ably assisted by **Kevin Wickart**, **Ryan Kane**, **Kyle Holliday**, **Herb Reichelt**, **Austin Travis**, **Joel Shoemaker**, **Cody Stuepfert**, **Brian Artman**, **Eli Mundy**, **Jason Copenbarger**, **Aimee Kerber**, **Laura McBurney**, **Chad Kirvan**, and **Charles Maaks**. J. Bruce Ismay, the White Star Line owner, is played by **Bob McLaughlin**, and **Mark Robinson** is making his Community Players debut as designer Thomas Andrews. First-class passengers include **Jim Kalmbach**, **Ashley Lyons**, **Fania Bourn**, **Wendi Fleming**, **Cris Embree**, **Todd Wineburner**, **Chuck Stuckey**, **Deb Smith**, **Joe Culpepper**, **Andrew Martin**, **Karen Clark**, **Chuck Palm**, **Sara Bronson**, **Jay Hartzler**, **Bruce Parrish**, **Cathy Sutliff**, **Chrissie Strong**, and **Scarlett Strong**. Second-class passengers include **Dave Lemmon**, **Reena Rhoda**, **Nick McBurney**, and **Kelly Slater**. Travelling third class are **Natalie LaRoque**, **Emily Wurmnest**, **Mindy LaHood**, **Gerald Price**, **Nikki Lask Aitken**, **Aditi Mocharla**, **Andrea Martinez**, **Diane Smith**, **Omni Bourn**, and **Eric Reichelt**.

Producer **Jean Lieder** has assembled the following staff: Music Director/Bandleader **Chad Kirvan**, Assistant Director and Choreographer **Sherise Krivan**, Scenic Designer and Master Builder **Bruce Parrish**, Costume Designer **Opal Virtue**, Lighting and Sound Effects Designer **Dan Virtue**, Sound Designer **Rich Plotkin**, Property Masters **Dorothy Mundy** and **Carol Plotkin**, Stage Manager **Judy Stroh**, House Manager **Samantha Smith**, and Projections Designer **Brett Cottone**.

Titanic will offer its pay-what-you-can preview on Thursday, May 5, with regular performances May 6-8, 12-15, and 19-22. Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday matinees begin at 2:30 p.m.

CP Member's Entry to be in Heartland Theatre Play Festival

Joe Strupek who has appeared regularly on the CP stage (most recently as Van Helsing in *Dracula*) was one of eight winners of Heartland Theatre's 2011 Ten Minute Play Festival. The plays in this year's festival are all set on the back porch.

Joe's play *Don't Forget to Play My Numbers* will be performed June 9-12, 16-18, 23-26 & July 1-2 at the Heartland theater at One Normal Plaza in Normal. For more information visit Heartland Theatre on the web at www.heartlandtheatre.org.

Congratulations, Joe!

Area Arts Roundtable

The Area Arts Roundtable (AART) is officially underway! Bylaws for the new arts organization were ratified in February and the membership structure was created in the April meeting. This group was formed by area arts organizations and individual artists as well to collaborate in the overall promotion of the arts in McLean County. A not-for-profit, housed by the McLean County Arts Center, its mission is to stimulate arts participation by encouraging cooperation and building leadership in the arts community, promoting a positive image for the arts as an essential part of the central Illinois culture.

AART has been present as several past art fairs to promote arts organizations and participation. It is currently developing a community-wide artist forum for the discussion of collaboration within the arts. New projects are in development and ideas and suggestions are welcome. For more information on participating groups go to www.areaartsroundtable.org or visit them on Facebook.

One State Together in the Arts

One State Together in the Arts is coming to Normal on May 23 & 24, 2011. This biennial event is for amateur and professional artists as well the people who are interested in the well-being of the arts in Illinois.

Speakers this year include Lieutenant Governor Shelia Simon, directors from the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Redmoon Theatre, and will feature world-leading visionary, innovator, designer, and author Bruce Mau as the keynote speaker.

The Marriott Hotel and Conference Center in Uptown Normal will house the event during the day and a tour of area art galleries will be offered each evening. For more information on schedules and registration, go to www.onestateillinois.com.

The cast of *Titanic* performs "No Moon" as an iceberg nears.

