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July, 2014

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Shrek Comes to Community Players

by John Lieder and Bob McLaughlin

Based on the 2001 animated film of the same name, *Shrek* opened on Broadway in December 2008, where its run of over a year was followed by a national tour and a London production. The Broadway production was also filmed.

The book and lyrics were by David Lindsay-Abaire, most well known for his plays *Fuddy Meers* and the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Rabbit Hole*. He had previously written the book for a musical, the short-lived *High Fidelity*, but *Shrek* was his first credit as a lyric writer. Composer Jeanine Tesori is having a big year. In addition to Community Players' production of *Shrek*, her first musical, *Violet*, is enjoying a successful Broadway revival, starring Sutton Foster (who originated the role of Fiona in *Shrek*) and her new musical *Fun Home* received rave reviews during its Off Broadway run at the Public Theater earlier this year and is scheduled to move

to Broadway in the fall. She is also well known for the stage version of *Thoroughly Modern Millie* and her collaboration with Tony Kushner, *Caroline, or Change*.

Our production of *Shrek, the Musical* promises to be a ton of fun. It starts with a large cast of over 60 with actors of all shapes, sizes, and ages. There are so many children in the cast that **Wendi Ayers** has been assigned the job of "child coordinator" to keep them all wrangled in.



Jaron Rhoda as Lord Farquaad sings "The Ballad of Farquaad."

Community Players' stalwart **Chris Terven** plays the always-trying-to-be terrifying and yet sometimes tender ogre, Shrek. His sidekick, Donkey, is humorously portrayed by **Matthew Henry**. **Lisa Groves** is delightful as the enchanted princess, betrothed to the diminutive Lord Farquaad, played by a "shortened" **Jaron Rhoda**. (There is no truth to the rumor that Jaron had his legs surgically shortened for the role.)

The list of other characters reads like a who's who of Fairy Tale Land. There's Pinocchio, played

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July - Aug. 2014

Board Meetings

July 15, 6:00 p.m.
August 12, 6:00 p.m.
Community Players Theatre

Shrek The Musical

Preview: July 10
Shows: July 11-13, 17-20, and
24-27

The Philadelphia Story

Auditions: July 28 & 29
Preview: Sept. 4
Shows: Sept. 5-7 & 11-14



Community Players

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

Newsletter Committee

Jim Kalmbach
John Lieder
Bob McLaughlin
Bruce Parrish
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 members of Community Players.

For information about joining us, please contact our membership chair.

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

The Philadelphia Story Auditions

It's seems difficult to imagine that the legendary Katherine Hepburn, winner of four Academy Awards, was ever considered "Box Office Poison." But, early in her career, she was labeled just that. After having achieved nearly instant success in the early 1930's, Hepburn fell into a bit of a professional slump after a series of cinema flops and came to the end of that decade nearly a "has been." That is until she, with the help of Howard Hughes, masterminded a comeback by buying out her own contract at RKO, securing the film rights to Philip Barry's romantic comedy, *The Philadelphia Story* (which he penned specifically for her and in which she starred on Broadway) and selling it to MGM studios under the condition that she play the leading role.



Released on the big screen in 1940, *The Philadelphia Story*, which we will be bringing to the Community Players stage this September, follows the romantic foibles of socialite Tracy Lord who finds herself, on the eve of her second wedding, to be fodder for a popular tabloid. The pending nuptials are further complicated by the sudden arrival of her ex-husband who appears to have unfinished business, and her philandering father (of whom she sharply disapproves), not to mention a mischievous little sister, a rum pot uncle, and an unfortunate fondness for late night swims.

Barry's play features wonderfully defined characters and the delicious language of the day, which gives sarcasm a curious sophistication. Auditions will be held July 28 and 29 from 7-9:30 p.m. at the theatre. Actors should be prepared to read from the script and display a willingness to take direction. The cast needs are 9 men, aged 25-60, and 6 women, aged 15 - 50. The preview is on September 4 with shows September 5-7 and 11-14.

Questions? Contact director **Tricia Stiller** at triciastiller@msn.com.

Community Players Plans New Website

This is the last print issue of *Curtain Calls*. As part of the changes the Board of Governors is planning for our membership program and our online presence, we are folding the newsletter into our new website which will be debuting this August. The new website is built on Wordpress and has been generously supported by Adam Listek of Listek Consulting. You can learn more about Adam and his services at www.listekconsulting.com.

We are excited to be expanding our online abilities to give you more of everything you love about *Curtain Calls* on

the new www.CommunityPlayers.org. We will continue to publish previews for new shows, but these previews will be longer and contain more color pictures as well as links to podcasts and videos. We will also offer an expanded theatre calendar, audition articles, historical articles (like this month's piece from our historian Bruce Parrish), Board of Governors news, special event information, and of course easy access to ordering tickets online.

Send questions or comments to Brett Cottone (technology@communityplayers.org) or Jim Kalmbach (kalmbach@ilstu.edu).

From Bloomington to Broadway and Beyond

by Bruce Parrish, Players Historian

As you stand in the wings, ready to perform, or are on stage performing, have you ever wondered about the people who came before you during the past 92 seasons of Community Players? Did any of them go on to pursue a professional career? How long did they stay at Players before deciding to go onto this next level? A number of actors have indeed gone on to various levels of success. Some of your past fellow Players have worked their entire careers in professional theatre while others achieved that level but later moved on to other pursuits. In this article I cover just a few fellow Players to give you an idea of what can be possible when you set your devotion to this goal.

William Duell (August 30, 1923 – December 22, 2011)

Mr. Duell performed at Players only once, back in the 1949-1950 season. He played the role of Fred Taylor in *John Loves Mary*. For his role, William was given the Aida Award for Supporting Actor in a Play. The Aida Awards were the Community Players version of a Tony Award. Mr. Duell was a senior at Illinois Wesleyan University that season. He went on to graduate work at the Yale School of Drama. Mr. Duell is best known for his role as Andrew McNair in the Broadway and film version of the Tony Award-winning musical *1776*. William never missed a performance in the show's initial run on Broadway. He played Caesar Rodney in the 1997 Broadway revival.



William Duell

Mr. Duell appeared as Jim Sefelt in the award-winning film *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*. He played Johnny, the shoe shine boy in the crime comedy series *Police Squad*. His New York stage successes began with the role of Filch in the 1954 production of *The Three Penny Opera*. Later successes included the stage productions of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and *The Man Who Came to Dinner* and the movie *In and Out*.

To Bloomington audiences, **Robert Price**, later to be known professionally as Conrad McLaren, was a senior Illinois Wesleyan University student when he directed the 1949-1950 season production of Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*. Bob also played the son, Tom, in the production.

Bob Price spent over twenty years acting, directing, and producing, as well as serving as a board member for Community Players. Bob, or Conrad as he was now known, went to the professional theatre after the Players 1967-1968 season. His last job for the Players was as scenic designer for *Never Too Late*.



Bob Price (Conrad McLaren)

Bob (listed as Conrad) appeared in such films as *The Green Card*, *Reversal of Fortune*, and *The Silver Bullet*. On Broadway, Conrad played Arvid Abernathy in the 1994-95 revival of *Guys and Dolls* (with Nathan Lane). He was the Grandfather/Foreman in the original Broadway production of *Ragtime* from 1998-2000.

Conrad's television appearances included the recurring character of Kate's father in the series *Kate and Allie*. He has appeared in numerous films made for television as well as individual appearances in many series.

Judith Ivey appeared in only one Community Players' production. She played the part of Sandra, the social worker, in Community Players' first production of *A Thousand Clowns* back in 1971. Judith was a freshman at Illinois State University at the time. After graduation, she headed off to Chicago, performing in a number of venues including the Goodman Theater and then, in the late 70s, she went on to New York. Judith won a Tony Award for Featured Actress in a Play in 1983 for *Steaming* and 1985 for *Hurlyburly*.



Judith Ivey

Judith has also appeared in numerous films and television shows. She was last seen on Broadway in *The Heiress* during the 2012-2013 Season. Recent television roles include *Elementary* and a recurring role on *White Collar*.

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... *Shrek* preview continued from page 1

by **Ramsey Hendricks**; Gingy, the gingerbread boy, played by **Breeann Dawson**; the Queen of Hearts, played by **Christie Vellella**; the Fairy Godmother, played by **Sequita Bridges**; the Shoemaker's Elf, played by **Ce Ce Hill**; Humpty Dumpty, played by **Ryan Groves**; the Mad Hatter, played by **John Poling**; Papa Bear, Mama Bear, and Baby Bear, played respectively by **Tony Smith**, **Jennifer Rusk**, and **Kalen Mapugay**; Peter Pan, played by **Jake Rathman**; the **Three Little Pigs**, played by **Nick Benson**, **Brian Clark**, and **Sean Stevens**; the Three Blind Mice, played by **Kellie Nolan**, **Katie Grogg**, and **Lindsay Nolan**; the Ugly Duckling, played by **Shelby Sharick**; the White Rabbit is played by a hoppy **Austin Travis**. The Wicked Witch is played by **Wendi Fleming** who also plays Mama Ogre. The Big Bad Wolf is portrayed by **Brenton Ways**, who also plays Papa Ogre. **Joe McDonald** also plays dual roles as King Harold and the Pied Piper. Additional characters include Young Fiona, played by **Melea Hauck**; Teen Fiona, played by **Samm Bettis**; Queen Lilian, played by **Jennifer Maloy**; the Bishop, played by **Jay Hartzler**, and a Dwarf, played by **Jacob Miller**. Jennifer Rusk doubles up as Dragon Lady with Christie Vellella, Sequita Bridges and **Rachel Phillips** as the Dragon Doo Wop trio. Last, but certainly not least, is **Solomon Rogers** who portrays Young Shrek. He's sure to elicit an "Awww" from anyone in attendance with the remotest mothering instinct.

Alan Wilson is director, with large amounts of assistance from **JoLynn Robinson** as Music Director

and **Wendy Baugh** as Choreographer. The three of them have managed to completely fill our stage in a wondrously organized and vocally brilliant fashion. Further production assistance comes from **Jay Hartzler** as Producer, **Eli Mundy** as Assistant Director and Sound Engineer, **John Cargill** as Lighting Designer, **Aimee Kerber** and Alex Lovell as "Kids Choreographers," with **Dorothy Mundy** and **Bridgette Richard** as Props Mistresses. Chris Terven, in addition to being Shrek, has designed the set, which is being built "by committee." **Tyler McWhorter** is Stage Manager and **Sally Baugh** is House Manager.

Alan Wilson and JoLynn Robinson, in addition to their other duties, are doing the costume design. They are being assisted by **Karen Clark**, **Grace Bova**, and **Jennifer West**. With such a large cast and the need to portray some pretty outlandish fairy tale characters, *Shrek the Musical*, has a sizeable costume budget. Many of the costumes have been rented, others are being adapted from our current stock and some actors are scrounging up their own costumes.

The pay-what-you-can Preview Performance is July 10 with regular performances, July 11-13, 17-20 and 24-27. The 2001 movie was given a PG rather than a G rating, probably because of some biological function humor and because, well, ogres and dragons can be pretty scary to little ones. We can fairly safely say, though, that this musical version is fun for the whole family.



... From Bloomington to Broadway continued from page 3

John D. Le May performed at Players from the late 1970s through the early 80s. His first role at Players was as a chorus member and dancer for the 1977 version of *Oklahoma!* John was a Parkside Junior High student at the time. John returned as an understudy in *Godspell* in 1979. For the opening musical of the 1979-1980 season John played one of the Anderson sons in *Shenandoah*. John's final appearance with Players was as Pepe in *West Side Story* in the 1980-1981 Season.



John D. Le May

John graduated from Illinois State University in 1984 and became a professional working actor right away. His television credits include *Parks and Rec*, *Eddie Dodd*, *Facts of Life*, and many others. John played the lead character, Ryan Dallius, in the television series *Friday the 13th*. John also appeared as Steven Freeman in *Jason Goes to Hell: The Final Friday*. John is the only actor

to star in both the television and film series for the *Friday the 13th* franchise. He continues to work in Los Angeles.

This article only covers a few people working in theater, movies, television and, now, all sorts of Internet ventures, who appeared on stage at Players. They all came from our community and joined us here at Community Players. I've been very blessed to meet and/or work with almost all of these talented individuals.



History Mystery Winners

We had two winners for last month's History Mystery contest. Carol Plotkin and Gayle Hess both identified the production as *The Women*, from November 1999, and the pictured actresses as **Katie Novak**, **Carol Scott**, **Susan Saunders**, **Julie Dawson**, and **Pamela Shandrow**. Congratulations Carol and Gayle!