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Hauptmann: Telling the Story of the “Crime of the Century”

by John Lieder

When we surveyed our audiences back in the fall of 2009 about their preferences for the types of shows they would like to see us produce, predictably musicals were the top response, followed by comedies and finally dramas. It seems that after having to deal with the conflicts of everyday life, people want to come to the theatre to forget about such matters and to be made to laugh. In other words, the majority don't want us to get too “real.” Understandable, but somewhat unfortunate, because as actors we love to be “real,” to portray real people with real and deep emotions in real situations.

Well, *Hauptmann*, by John Logan is “real” drama, but in a somewhat “unreal” format. It tells the real story (history) of Bruno Richard Hauptmann, convicted and executed for the abduction and murder of the Lindbergh baby. But not only is Hauptmann a character in the play, he is the storyteller: communicating directly with the audience as well as participating in the action of the play. He involves the guards in the acting out of the story. The result is an unusual and very compelling drama, and it is coming to the Players stage, opening January 6. I was privileged to sit in on the December 22nd rehearsal.

Brian Artman has the title role. It is an extremely challenging role in its size and depth. Artman is up to the task. He is a masterfully engaging storyteller who

seamlessly segues between narrator and actor. His German dialect is right on—authentic and perfectly understandable.

Artman is supported by six highly capable actors who portray the guards and multiple other characters. The main characters are famous aviator Charles Lindbergh, played by **John Bowen**; Anne Lindbergh, his wife, played by **Mindy LaHood**; Anna Hauptmann, played by **Vicky Hallstrom**; Attorney General David Wilentz, played by **Joel Shoemaker**; Dr. John F. Condon, played by **Joe Strupek**; Judge Thomas Whitaker Trenchard, played by **Gary Strunk**. Although telling a very serious story in a very serious manner, it was delightful to watch these performers distinguish their various characterizations.



The set, designed and built by **Jeremy Stiller** is minimal, consisting of raised platforms in the middle of the set to serve as the courtroom and other locations. It suits its purpose perfectly and includes a special surprise near the end of the play. The actors use the entire stage, including the far stage left and right aprons.

Hauptmann is directed by **Opal Virtue**, who is also



The action ceases as Brian Artman as Bruno Hauptmann addresses the audience.

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Jan. - Feb. 2012

Board Meetings

Jan. 10 6:00 p.m.
Feb. 14, 6:00 p.m.
Community Players Theatre

Hauptmann

Preview: Jan. 5
Shows: Jan. 6-8, 12-15, 19-21

Blithe Spirit

Auditions: Jan. 9-10
Preview: March 1
Shows: March 2-4, 8-11, 15-17

**You Know I Can't Hear You When
the Water's Running**

Auditions Jan. 16-17
Shows: March 22-25



Community Players

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Newsletter Committee

Jim Kalmbach
Wendi Fleming
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, Wendi Fleming at cplayersmember@aol.com.

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

Blithe Spirit Auditions

Ask yourself this question, "What do you do when your apartment is blown apart by a bomb?" Noël Coward took a five day trip to the Welsh countryside and wrote what he called a "light comedy about death." Not everyone thought it was a great idea to present a satire about death during the height of the London blitz and a world war that was taking countless lives; however, with Coward himself directing, it became an enormous hit with 1,997 performances in London's West End. It also did well on Broadway later that year, running for 657 performances. Coward adapted the play for film in 1945, starring Rex Harrison, and directed a musical adaptation, *High Spirits* on Broadway in 1964. It returned to Broadway in 2009 with Angela Lansbury.



Blah, blah, blah. Enough with the history and dates.

The situation at the heart of this comedy is a fine one—an ill-conceived cocktail party séance (lead by one unique occultist) brings one man's wife back from the dead. She's funny, needy and manipulative, and not necessarily in that order. This might be less of a problem if our man's flesh-and-blood wife weren't already a bit on the jealous side (can you say "perpetual cat fight"?). With all the sophisticated humor you expect of Coward, *Blithe Spirit* is prime-time stuff. Except better.

Auditions are January 9 & 10, 2012. *Blithe Spirit* requires a cast of 2 males, passing for 35-ish and up, 5 females who can range passing for 25 and beyond. Be prepared for lines and lots of round about ways of wording things to sound sophisticated and pretty (or in other words, English.) Although English accents aren't required, I would love for you to give it your best shot and we can work from there. A wise director once told me that you don't have to use an accent if your talent shines enough for an audience not to notice.

I hope to see you there. We will have a lot of fun!

The show runs March 2-4, 8-11, 15-17, 2012.

—Director, Tom Smith



. . . Hauptmann Preview continued from page 1.

costuming the show. **Sherry Bradshaw** is producer. **Hannah Kerns** is assistant director and stage manager with help from **Austin Travis** on stage crew. **Dan Virtue** is doing lights. **Carol Plotkin** is in charge of properties. Newcomer **Jamie Wilson** is sound technician and **Wendi Fleming** is house manager. **Sherise Kirvan** contributes some choreography.

The pay-what-you-can Preview Performance is January 5. Regular performances are January 6-8, 12-15 and 19-21. As usual, evening performances are at 7:30 and Sunday matinees begin at 2:30. *Hauptmann* contains intense situations and some harsh language and is not intended for very young audiences.

Bruce and Kathy Parrish: An Appreciation

by Bob McLaughlin

“Each man’s life touches so many other lives. When he isn’t around he leaves an awful hole, doesn’t he?”

—Clarence the Angel in *It’s a Wonderful Life*

I’m going to begin with a story that’s personal, but not unique.

Back in 1996, I hadn’t performed on stage for seventeen years, but I saw an ad in the paper for Community Players’ auditions for *A Little Night Music*. I didn’t really have a hankering to act again, but I’d always wanted to do a Sondheim show, so I screwed up my courage and made my way to 201 Robinhood Lane. The first people I met when I walked through the door were Kathy Parrish, who was president of Players at the time, and Bruce Parrish, who was directing. I had certain negative preconceptions about community theater (I was from New York, after all), but that evening and the weeks that followed disabused me of all of them. I expected community theater to be cliquish, but here, where nobody knew me from Adam, I was cast in a lead. I expected community theater performances to involve much munching of the scenery, but here, every rehearsal, the director would take each of the actors aside to talk about the subtlety of the characters. I expected community theater directors to mostly manage traffic, but here was one who was adept at creating stage pictures that contributed to telling the story. After the final performance, Kathy gave me a hug and said, “I’m so glad you walked through that door,” but, really, I was the one who was glad: I knew by then that I had found a

new home, and Kathy and Bruce were the face of that home.

My story isn’t unique because there are very few, if any, people who have walked through the door at Community Players over the last three decades who haven’t been touched by Bruce and Kathy. We have shared the stage with them. We have been directed by them. We have

acted on sets, handled props, and worn costumes that they have designed and/or built. We have benefitted from their organizational wisdom (they both served many terms on the Board of Governors, and each has served as president). We have learned from them. We have watched their daughter Elizabeth grow up singing, dancing, moving sets, and stage managing. It’s true that the Parrishes are the face of Community Players, but they are also its heart and soul.

Now, owing to the vagaries of State Farm management, Bruce, Kathy, and Elizabeth are leaving Bloomington-Normal and moving to Atlanta, Georgia (more specifically, the suburb of Suwanee—at least it’s kind of a show tune). Players’ spring shows will go on, of course, and the seasons after, too, but we’ll all have the feeling of something missing.



Photo by Dale Griffith



Cast Picture of *Stalag 17* 2003/4 season. In the front row: Kathy (Producer) and Elizabeth (Stage Manager) far left, Bruce (Director) far right.

We all of us have our favorite memories—of Bruce clowning in *Kiss Me, Kate* or facing down death in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, of Kathy choreographing the allemande in *My Fair Lady*, of Bruce’s gorgeous sets, of Kathy’s sense of style, of Bruce’s enthusiasm and reverence for Players’ history, of Kathy’s bon mots when giving notes—but what we’ll remember most is their dedication to an

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. . . Bruce and Kathy continued from page 3.

organization they love and their devotion to putting their best work on stage. (It's not too late to honor that memory by contributing to the 35 for 35 "Fun" Raiser—see www.communityplayers.org for details.)

Speaking for everyone who's been involved with Community Players, I hope that this is à bientôt rather than good-bye. Bruce, Kathy, Elizabeth: travel safely, be well, and come back to us soon.



How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying, 1998/99. Bruce and Kathy in the front row, Elizabeth in the back left. Bruce was also the producer and set designer/builder and Kathy was the choreographer.



Bruce as Big Daddy in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, 2004/05.



Bruce as Judge James Wilson in *1776*, 1997/98.

History Mystery Contest Part 2!

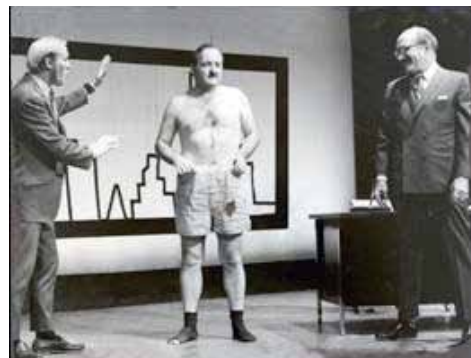
Announcing the winners of last month's History Mystery Contest: **Tom Smith**, **Carol Plotkin**, and **Sally Parry** all answered correctly that the photo was of *The Desk Set*, the classic comedy by William Marchant, about a company's attempt to replace its research and information staff with a computer. Tom Smith correctly named the year of Players' production as 1983. No one named any of the actors, who were (from left to right): Bob Pritts (as Richard Sumner), Deborah Nelson (Miss Warner), Catherine Brennan (Bunny Watson), Pamela Lovell (Ruthie Saylor), Rosemary Luitjens (partially hidden, Sadel Meyer), and Kate Butler (Peg Costello). Congratulations to our winners.



Here is a new photo and another chance to win. Identify the show from Players' past represented in this photo.

Bonus points for identifying the year. Double bonus points for identifying two or more performers.

Send answers to rmclaugh@ilstu.edu. Winners will be praised in the next issue!



Ninety Years in the Making: Players Announce 2012/2013 Season

Community Player's is proud to announce its upcoming 90th season with a celebration of comedy, drama, and musicals. Staff applications will be available at the Community Players box office and via a link on www.communityplayers.org starting in January 2012. **All productions are subject to availability. All dates are subject to change.**

Legally Blonde: The Musical (Musical)

Music and lyrics by Laurence O'Keefe & Nell Benjamin;
Book by Heather Hach
Summer Theatre Production. Not a part of the 2012-2013 Season.

Auditions: May 20-22, 2012, Preview: July 12, 2012,
Performances: July 13-15, 19-22, 26-29, 2012

Based on the novel by Amanda Brown and the Reese Witherspoon film, *Legally Blonde* is the story of Elle Woods, a sorority girl who enrolls at Harvard Law School to win back her ex-boyfriend, Warner. In doing so, she discovers how her knowledge of the law can help others, and successfully defends exercise queen Brooke Wyndham in a very public murder trial. The 2007 Broadway production which played to almost 600 performances is sure to be an audience favorite!

You Can't Take it With You (Comedy)

George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart
Auditions: July 16-17, 2012, Preview: August 30, 2012
Performances: August 31-September 2, 6-9, 2012

Winner of the 1937 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, *You Can't Take it With You* tells the tale of the Sycamore family. At first they seem mad, but it is not long before you realize that if they are mad, then the rest of the world is madder! The play was the basis for the 1938 film—directed by Frank Capra and featuring Jimmy Stewart, Jean Arthur, and Lionel Barrymore—which was awarded the Academy Award for Best Picture and Best Director.

Leaving Iowa (Comedy)

Tim Clue and Spike Manton
Laboratory Theatre Production. Not a Part of the 2012-2013 Season
Auditions: July 23-24, 2012, Performances: October 4-7, 2012

The spark behind *Leaving Iowa* comes from being children of parents from the now dubbed "greatest generation." The story is a toast to their idealism and character and a little roast of their undying dedication to the classic family road trip. More specifically, it is about Don Browning, a middle-aged writer, who returns home and decides to finally take his father's ashes to his childhood home. When Don discovers Grandma's house is now a grocery store, he begins traveling across Iowa searching for a proper resting place for his father. This father-and-son road trip shifts smoothly from the present to Don's memories of the annual, torturous vacations of his childhood. Don't miss this special, one-weekend-only offering!

Irving Berlin's White Christmas (Musical)

Music and Lyrics by Irving Berlin; Based on the film by Norman Krasna, Norman Panama and Melvin Frank;
Book by David Ives and Paul Blake
Auditions: October 7-9, 2012, Preview: November 29, 2012, Performances: November 30-December 2, 6-9, 13-16, 2012

Based on the beloved, timeless film, this heartwarming musical adaptation features seventeen Irving Berlin songs and a book by David Ives and Paul Blake. War veterans Bob Wallace and Phil Davis have a successful song-and-dance act after World War II. With romance in mind, the two follow a duo of beautiful singing sisters en route to their Christmas show at a Vermont lodge, which just happens to be owned by Bob and Phil's former army commander. The dazzling score features well known standards including "Sisters," "Snow," "The Best Things Happen While You're Dancing," and the perennial favorite, "White Christmas."

Lend Me a Tenor (Comedy)

Ken Ludwig
Auditions: December 10-11, 2012, Preview: January 24, 2013, Performances: January 25-27, January 31-February 3, 2013

Premiering in 1986, *Lend Me a Tenor* had an initial Broadway run of 476 performances. In 1934, the renowned tenor, Tito Merelli, is scheduled to sing the lead in *Othello* for the Cleveland Opera Company. Chaos ensues when Merelli's wife, who has mistaken an autograph-seeker hidden in his closet for a secret lover, leaves him a "Dear John" letter. The distraught Merelli accidentally is given a double dose of tranquilizers and passes out. Saunders, the company's General Manager, is determined that the show will go on, so he forces his assistant Max to impersonate the opera star. What follows is a chain-reaction of mistaken identities, farcical plot twists, double entendres, innuendoes, and constant entrances and exits through many doors!

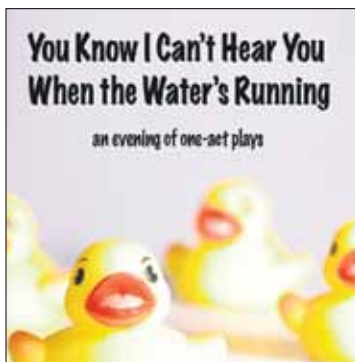
To Kill a Mockingbird (Drama)

Based on the book by Harper Lee; Dramatized by Christopher Sergel
Auditions: January 28-29, 2013, Preview: March 14, 2013, Performances: March 15-17, 21-24, 2013

To Kill a Mockingbird centers on Scout Finch, a young girl living in the quiet, southern town of Maycomb, Alabama, with her father, Atticus, and her older brother, Jem. Scout is about to experience the dramatic events that will affect the rest of her life. Atticus is appointed by the court to defend Tom Robinson, a black man who has been accused of as-

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Auditions for Community Players' Lab Theatre Series



plays written by Robert Anderson. This is an exciting opportunity for a large number of actors to be involved!

As part of its lab theatre series, Community Players is doing something a little different this year! On January 16 and 17, 2012, auditions will be held for *You Know I Can't Hear You When the Water's Running*, a collection of four unrelated, one-act

In *The Shock of Recognition*, there is a difference of opinion between a famous playwright and his stubborn producer. The playwright is convinced that an important, albeit short scene in his show will change theatre forever. The producer feels that the scene is too controversial and should be removed from the play. Add in a giggly secretary and an eager, determined actor and the result is completely unexpected. Director **Dorothy Mundy** will be casting three men and one woman.

The Footsteps of Doves shows us a couple who, having been wed for twenty-five years, has come to a store to pick out a new bed or beds. Should they buy twin beds or a double? Does the choice imply starting over, or the end? They don't get much help

from the salesman, but what about an uninvited young woman who wants a big bed because she is all alone? Director **Brett Cottone** will be casting two men and two women.

In *I'll Be Home for Christmas*, Chuck and Edith realize how empty their marriage has become as they await the arrival of their adult children to celebrate Christmas. *I'll Be Home for Christmas* maintains the light humor of the other plays, but is also serious and very touching, particularly for the actor portraying Chuck. Director **Joel Shoemaker** will be casting one man and two women. The man and one woman must convey the believability of a married couple, while the second actress portrays their daughter.

I'm Herbert presents a scattered conversation between Herbert and Muriel, an elderly couple with memory problems who try in vain to recall their earlier relationships. Director **Sherry Bradshaw** will be casting one man and one woman.

Those auditioning will be asked to fill out an audition form and read prepared excerpts from the different scripts. *You Know I Can't Hear You When the Water's Running* will perform on March 22-25, 2012.

Please contact the producer, **Brian Artman** (309.212.7048), if you have any questions.



... 2012/2013 Season continued from page 5.

saulting a young white woman. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, *To Kill a Mockingbird* was also adapted into a critically acclaimed 1962 film of the same name, starring Gregory Peck, as Atticus Finch. Make sure to get your tickets early; this American classic is sure to be a hit!

Monty Python's Spamalot (Musical Comedy)
Music by John Du Prez, Eric Idle, and Neil Innes, Book and Lyrics by Eric Idle
Auditions: March 17-19, 2013, Preview: May 9, 2013,
Performances: May 10-12, 16-19, 23-26, 2013.

Lovingly "ripped off" from the 1975 film, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, *Spamalot* is a highly irreverent parody of the Arthurian legend, but it differs from the film in many ways, especially in its parody of Broadway theatre. The original 2005 Broadway production—starring Tim Curry, David Hyde Pierce, and Hank Azaria—won three Tony Awards, including Best Musical and received 14 Tony Award nominations. This

hilarious romp features such Python favorites as "Knights of the Round Table," "Brave Sir Robin," "The Song That Goes Like This," and "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life."

A Community Players Special Event 90 Years in the Making!

For one weekend only, and as part of our 90th anniversary celebration, Community Players will present a musical revue celebrating our history!

Don't miss this very special tribute to ninety years of quality, live theatre, as performed by some of your favorite Community Players stars of the past and present! Performance dates will be announced as they are finalized.