

A²ct

ANN ARBOR CIVIC THEATRE

Spotlight

February, 2006

A²ct
ANN ARBOR CIVIC THEATRE

06·07 season 'fooling around'

fooling around with...STRIPPERS
the full monty
directed by wendy sielaff
sep 14·17, 2006
lydia mendelssohn theatre

fooling around with...WOMEN
tom jones
directed by jimmy dee arnold
nov 9·12, 2006
towsley auditorium

fooling around with...THE WRONG GUYS
sweet charity
directed by edmond reynolds
jan 11·14, 2007
lydia mendelssohn theatre

fooling around with...MAGIC
the tempest
directed by david andrews
mar 15·18, 2007
towsley auditorium

fooling around with...UNMARRIED MEN
cactus flower
directed by cassie mann
apr 19·22, 2007
towsley auditorium

fooling around with...
SEX, DRUGS and ROCK 'N' ROLL
hair
directed by caitlin frankel
jun 7·10, 2007
lydia mendelssohn theatre

05-06
season
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A2CT Sets 2006-07 Season *by Tiff Crutchfield*

On behalf of Ann Arbor Civic Theatre, I am excited to announce the lineup for our 2006-07 season, as recommended by the Play Selection Committee and approved by the Board. Once again, we will feature three musicals at Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre and three plays at Towsley Auditorium. See the sidebar for the complete list. I'm especially excited by the mix of experienced and first-time directors and a slate that includes everything from classic Shakespeare to our first-ever production of a show from the 21st century.

With the season in place, we can turn our attention to season ticket sales. Season tickets are the best way for patrons to experience all of Ann Arbor Civic Theatre's great production, especially considering additional benefits such as priority

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(left to right: Jimmy Dee Arnold as Murray with Caroline Hippler, Neal Kelley and Kent Klausner in A Thousand Clowns, March 2-5 at Towsley Auditorium. Full story is on page 3.

FOR TICKETS AND INFORMATION:
CALL 734.971.2228 OR VISIT WWW.A2CT.ORG

06-07 Season Selected (cont'd)

seat selection and a 15% discount off single-ticket prices. Season tickets make great gifts and can be a fun and community-oriented part of an employee incentive program. Season tickets will be available upon the completion of our 2006-07 season brochure, which we will mail soon to all A2CT members and anybody else on our mailing list. If you know somebody who should receive it, ask them to contact our office by email at manager@a2ct.org or by phone at 734-

971-2228 to be added to the mailing list.



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Ann Arbor Civic Theatre

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performance of this year's Committee has been exemplary.

Besides the co-chairs, the other members of the Play Selection Committee are Kathleen Beardmore, Mark Bernstein, Joyce Casale, Jon Elliott, Jean Leverich, Nathaniel Madura, Suzi Peterson, Emily Rogers, Marci Rosenberg and Kathy Waugh.

Planning is already underway for next year's play selection process. If you are an A2CT member and are interested in being part of the Play Selection Committee, contact the office (manager@a2ct.org or 734-971-2228) for more information. ■

A New Volunteer Coordinator

Please welcome our new volunteer coordinator, Torey Berneis. Many of you know Torey from her stints as props master, lighting designer and board operator, stage manager, box office assistance, and more. Given Torey's boundless energy and knowledge of Civic and its volunteers, she should be a great addition to our team.

One of Torey's first tasks is to update the database. You might be hearing from her soon about your volunteer interests, or you can contact her at: volunteer@a2ct.org. ■

Guys & Dolls Delights

Guys & Dolls, directed by Brian Buckner and Natalie Malotke, chased away the winter blues with a rousing and successful run at the Mendelssohn Theater January 12-15. Buoyed by great audiences and critical acclaim, the talented cast and crew staged a lively production of the classic musical. Kudos to Leo Babcock, who stepped into the role of Nathan Detroit with only nine rehearsals before opening night, and the cast and crew who pitched in to sew costumes and build sets over a busy holiday season. *Guys & Dolls* was not only a terrific production, but it exemplified the spirit of community that makes Civic Theatre what it is and has been for over 76 years! ■

A2CT Sends in the "Clowns"



Like those little cars in the circus...suddenly its doors open and out come a thousand clowns, whooping and hollering and raising hell."

A Thousand Clowns is in rehearsal after a shaky start. There were some initial casting problems (why do people audition if they can't be in the show?) but the final cast is awesome.

There are some Civic favorites like Jimmy Dee Arnold, Kent Klausner and Jon Elliott, and newcomers Caroline Hippler, Neal Kelley and Scott Bartz. The show revolves around a free spirited, out of work writer and his efforts to keep the Bureau of Child Welfare from removing his nephew from his care.

Part of the challenge of the play is to keep it topical, even though it was written in the 60's, and to collect all the knick-knacks (some call it junk) that Murray, the writer, has collected. It looks like we'll need a small truck for the set and a large truck for the props.

So far all is running smoothly and we are only looking for a large group of people interested in having a good laugh to come and see our performance at Towsley Auditorium from March 2 to March 5.

Thom (TJ) Johnson, Director ■

A Thousand Clowns runs March 2-5 at Towsley Auditorium on the campus of Washtenaw Community College.

Performances are at 8pm Thursday through Saturday, and 2pm on Sunday. Tickets are \$13 on Thursday, and \$20 (\$17 for students and seniors) Friday through Sunday. Tickets are available online at a2ct.org, by phone, in person at the A2CT office, or at the door of the Towsley Auditorium 45 minutes before each performance. For additional show information, visit www.a2ct.org or call the box office at (734) 971-A2CT (2228).

The Nerd is coming over for a visit in Spring



A2CT ushers in spring with the zany comedy *The Nerd*, April 6-9 at WCC's Towsley auditorium. Directed by Andy Ballnik, *The Nerd* revolves around mild-mannered architect, Willum, whose life is turned up-side-down by the arrival of his long-lost army buddy, Rick. When it looks like war hero Rick is never going to leave, Willum and his friends devise a wild plan to roust him out--with hilarious results. With plenty of sight-gags, cases of mistaken identity, and laugh-out-loud humor, *The Nerd* is a sure way to shrug off winter and put a spring in your step.

The Nerd's talented cast features Nathaniel Fremuth as Willum Cubbert, Joy Martin as Tansy McGinnis, Erik Wright-Olsen as Axel Hammond, Edmond Reynolds as Warnock Waldgrave, Amy Bogetto as Clelia Waldgrave, Oren Steiner as Thor Waldgrave, and Dann Smallwood as the Nerd. ■

The Nerd runs April 6-9 at Towsley Auditorium at WCC. Performances are at 8pm Thursday through Saturday, and 2pm on Sunday. Tickets are \$13 on Thursday, and \$20 (\$17 for students and seniors) Friday through Sunday. Tickets are available online at a2ct.org, by phone, in person at the A2CT office, or at the door of the Towsley Auditorium 45 minutes before each performance. For additional show information, visit www.a2ct.org or call the box office at (734) 971-A2CT (2228).




What are these people doing with bags on their heads? Find out by seeing The Nerd April 6-9th! Nerd Director, Andy Ballnik, posed as the title role for this promo shot for the 05-06 Season Brochure. Dann Smallwood is playing the Nerd in our April 06 production.

The Show Must Go On

Beginning with this issue of the Spotlight, we will be highlighting memorable stage experiences by Civic veterans. This month, Robin Barlow shares with us a few nerve-wracking moments from *Look Homeward, Angel*. If you have any good "war stories," or know someone who does, let us know.

LOOKING BACKWARD AT LOOK HOMEWARD, ANGEL, 1981

by Robin Barlow

 *Look Homeward, Angel*, a play based on Thomas Wolfe's novel about life in a North Carolina boarding house, was performed by the Civic Theatre at the Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre in 1981. The director was Susan Morris, which meant that no "i" remained undotted, and no "t" uncrossed. She assigned us Wolfe's novel as required reading. She arranged for us to have dialect-training sessions with a specialist in the U-M Theatre Department. It was important, we were told, to maintain the Piedmont accent of the western Carolinas, and never to lapse into the "Beauregard" accent of the Mississippi Delta.

The boarding house is run by the Gant family. I played W.O. Gant, the drunken dad. The role was well within my range. I learned several lessons from the play, chiefly that the theatre gods are powerful and wise. I will give you some examples.

At the intermission of one performance, I was surrounded by admirers in the Green Room, and got totally immersed in signing autographs. Suddenly someone shouted: "Hey, Robin, you're supposed to be on stage!" The second Act had started without me. My entry was late and breathless, and it took some time for the play to recover. I was mortified, and recognized that the theatre gods had punished me for my hubris. I can say that in the 25 years since then, the problem has not recurred.

At one point, W.O. Gant is supposed to collapse in a drunken stupor. I wanted to do this realistically, that is, not to look where I was falling, nor to break my fall with my arms, but to fall rigidly like a bowling pin. I did this in a dress rehearsal. From my prone position on the floor, I saw out of the corner of my eye that my head had landed a few inches from the sharp edge of a low platform. I was that close to ending my theatrical career, and several of my other careers too. I thanked the theatre gods for saving me. I can say that in the 25 years since then, the problem has not recurred.



The Gant Family in formal pose. Clockwise from top left: Greg Alexander (Luke Gant), Cathe Wright (Eliza Gant), Brian Colgan (Ben Gant), Alison Maker (Helen Gant Barton), Carl Hanna (Eugene Gant) and Robin Barlow (W.O. Gant).

The central characters of the play (sorry, Cathel!) are the young Eugene Gant and his girlfriend Laura. These parts were beautifully played by Carl Hanna and Mary King. Not long after the production, Carl and Mary got married, as sometimes happens with leading man and leading lady in the theatre. After some years, they got divorced. The theatre gods were not pleased, and resolved to correct the situation. Carl and Mary were reunited in marriage last year. I am sure that in the next 25 years, the problem will not recur. ■

ANN ARBOR CIVIC THEATRE VISION STATEMENT

Ann Arbor Civic Theatre values and promotes creative excellence and personal artistic growth through:

- Presentation of quality theatre performances for the community
- Open invitation for participation in all aspects of theatrical production

- Development of talent through educational, apprenticeship, and performance opportunities

ANN ARBOR CIVIC THEATRE MISSION STATEMENT

Ann Arbor Civic Theatre is a community theatre group. We exist to provide opportunities for the members of the community to participate in and attend live theater.

From the Managing Auditions! and Program Directors

Strategic Planning Retreat Held

Seeing how this winter has been unseasonably warm, there has been no hibernation for us. We have been quite busy here at the A2CT office! Between taking care of production details for the next three shows in the 05-06 season and planning for the 06-07 season, we were able to gather together to discuss long-range plans for the future as well.

On Saturday January 21st, the A2CT Board of Directors and Staff held an all day Strategic Planning retreat. Kudos to Board member and mediator Catherine Lilly for leading a very well-organized retreat. And bravo to the dedicated Board members who stayed indoors to participate in the retreat instead of enjoying the unseasonably sunny, warm day! Productive and inspiring, the day focused on our look to the future. A consensus was reached as to where we are as an organization now and where we're headed in the future. And the future looks bright!

A summary of the retreat will be available to members soon. Strategic planning and envisioning will continue, and we welcome the involvement of our membership.

Happy impending spring.
Suzi & Cassie ■



Get ready to explore the secrets of the Chicken Ranch by auditioning for The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas.

Junior Theatre's The Reluctant Dragon

Auditions for the A2CT Junior Theatre production of the children's classic, *The Reluctant Dragon*, directed by Anthony Heaphy, take place Monday, March 20 and Tuesday, March 21, from 4-6pm. Callbacks, if needed, are Wednesday, March 23 from 4-6pm. All auditions take place at A2CT's Rehearsal Studio at 322 W. Ann St. in Ann Arbor.

In this delightful and timely tale, a brave young boy, Jon, sneaks out of his house to find the ferocious dragon who frightened his father. Instead of a vicious monster, Jon discovers a friendly, book-reading and tea-drinking dragon who becomes his friend. The people of Jon's village are determined to kill the beast, but through a clever conspiracy between Jon and the dragon, they manage to convince the town that peace is much better than fighting.

The Reluctant Dragon has roles for up to 25 actors in grades 4-12. Auditions consist of theater games and cold readings from the script. Actors should attend one of the two regular auditions and should be available for callbacks. No pre-registration is required. Production dates are May 18-21, 2006, at Washtenaw Community College's College Theater.

For further information, visit the audition page of the A2CT website at www.a2ct.org, or call the A2CT office at 971-2228.

The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas

Auditions for the musical, *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, directed by Edmond Reynolds, take place Saturday, March 11 from noon-5pm and Sunday, March 12 from noon-5pm with callbacks Monday, March 13, from 6-10pm. Specific audition requirements will be on our website (a2ct.org) and at the office by the time you read this article! Rehearsals will begin March 20, and the production dates are June 8-11, 2006 at the Lydia Mendelssohn Theater. ■



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ANN ARBOR CIVIC THEATRE



BRINGING DRAMA TO ANN ARBOR FOR 75 YEARS, AND IT SHOWS.

05-06 'love with a twist' season

- 09/05 West Side Story
- 11/05 All My Sons
- 11/05 (Jr.) Dorothy Meets Alice
- 01/06 Guys and Dolls
- 03/06 A Thousand Clowns
- 04/06 The Nerd
- 05/06 (Jr.) The Reluctant Dragon
- 06/06 The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas