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Theatre Arts Department

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SIDES

The Newsletter of the Department of Theatre Arts
At Eastern Illinois University

June 2008

Volume VII. Number 2

GOODBYE TO OUR FRIEND – THE VILLAGE THEATRE



Closing it's doors.... well at least for the Theatre Arts Department.

The summer of 2002 the Theatre Arts Department sat and waited in the old Doudna surrounded by "blue tubs." July 5th contractors began to trans-form the former County Market into the Village Theatre. In November, the first production in the renovated space raised the curtain on what would be six years of classes and performances. WAITING FOR GODOT (directed and designed by C.P. Blanchette) gave new life to the abandoned grocery store.

Forty-three productions later, the doors were ready to close. One last event (could it be called the 44th production?) a wedding of two Theatre Arts majors , Leslie McGinnis and Ryan Peternell, closed the curtain



Now, like before, the Department sits and waits surrounded by a new assortment of "blue tubs." Everything is set for a June move as we wait for the go ahead to move back to campus. There is great anticipation as we look forward to the return to campus. Classes are scheduled to begin in the new spaces in August and the first production will open in The Theatre, the new proscenium, on October 3rd.



THEATRE DEPARTMENT WELCOMES Nicholas "Nick" Shaw

The Department of Theatre Arts is pleased to announce the hire of Mr. Nick Shaw. Nick will be joining the THA faculty in the fall as a replacement (if that is possible) for the retired Clarence Blanchette. Nick completed his MFA in Scenic Design, from the University of Missouri at Kansas City, May 2008. He brings to EIU a broad range of design experience, outstanding computer skills and strong technical expertise. In the fall Nick will serve as TD on the opening production of ARSENIC AND OLD LACE and will be teaching Stagecraft and Introduction to Theatre. Nick will design the opening spring production, BRIGHTON BEACH MEMOIRS, to be directed by Jerry Eisenhour.



REUNION and RENEWAL

After a six-year absence from campus, The Department of Theatre Arts returns to the renovated Doudna Fine Arts Center with something old, something new and lots of good fun.

Clarence Blanchette, who retired spring of '07, couldn't stay away very long. The faculty invited Clarence to return to campus and reopen the Doudna Fine Arts Center. He will direct and design ARSENIC AND OLD LACE (1939), scheduled to run October 3-7.

A reunion for Theatre Arts alums is also being planned around the production. ARSENIC AND OLD LACE will open The Theatre, the new 275 seat proscenium stage, performance venue. ARSENIC will contain all of the fun and mystery of the original Joseph Otto Kesselring (1902 - 1967) play, but there will be a few surprises. Construction has already begun on the set; there is great anticipation as we look to move back to the Doudna.

A FULL CAST OF GRADUATES

On Saturday, May 3, eight theatre majors: (Brian Aycock, Laura Black, Abigail Carter, Leslie McGinnis, Andrew Moeggenborg, Ryan Peternell, Andrew Sutherland and Fay Vayner) walked to receive their diploma. In addition, Kevin Folliard, a theatre participant, graduated with a degree in General Studies.

Congratulations graduates! We will miss you.

A STANDING OVATION



(picture by Connie McGinnis)

The Village Theatre closed with a spectacular performance – the wedding of Leslie McGinnis and Ryan Peternell. The happy couple met as freshmen in the Theatre Department and said their vows in front of a packed house on May 17, 2008. The Peternell's have made their home in Evanston, IL.

Congratulations Leslie & Ryan, we wish you happiness and success.



EIU THEATRE ALUMNI REUNION CLASSES OF 1995-2002 OCTOBER 3-5

Contact a committee member if you have not been contacted: Jessica Connors (jessica@everafterchicago.com), Jen Corrington Whittington or J. Sain for more details.



get ready.

OCTOBER 24-26, 2008

please save the date for our rededication.
we can't wait to welcome you back.

We hope you'll join us for our rededication weekend to celebrate the extraordinary rebirth of the Doudna Fine Arts Center. We've been waiting a long time to begin our new life in the Doudna and to say with great pride, "Welcome back!"

KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE EIU CALENDAR

A year celebrating the reopening of the Doudna Fine Arts Center will be posted on the Eastern Illinois University website (www.eiu.edu) as well as linked on the Theatre website (www.eiu.edu/~theatre).

Don't miss the exciting events happening in the coming year as special guests and alumni come to campus to perform, present and display their talents.

STARS SHINE!!!

The Department of Theatre Arts at EIU took time from packing to recognize the outstanding work of its students. On Saturday, April 26, the Department gathered at Miller's Banquet Hall to offer its yearly awards in conjunction with Alpha Psi Omega. The following awards were presented:

Kayla Blue – received the first Marjorie Ingram Griffin award for students seeking teacher certification in Theatre Arts. Ms. Blue is also the recipient of the Livingston Lord Scholarship for 2008.

The "Doc" Sullivan award went to rising senior, Elizabeth Powers.

The Outstanding Senior award, as voted by the faculty, went to Andrew "Techie" Moeggenborg.

APO presented the student selected, outstanding student awards at each grade level. The freshman award went to Caitlin Bieda, Aubrey Wiggs received the sophomore award, the junior award went to Elizabeth Powers, and the Outstanding Senior award, as voted by the students, went to Brian Aycock.

Congratulations to all recipients and continued good luck with your careers.



Aycock Wins Best Paper of Symposium 2007



(L to R: Brendan Hughes, Brian Aycock, Andrew Moeggenborg, Amy Lipman, Erica Walker)

This year's winner of the "Best Paper of Symposium" award is Brian Aycock, a Theatre Arts major at Eastern, for his paper entitled, "From Capitano to Fraternity 'Bro': The Evolution and Influence of Commedia dell'Arte on Modern Day Improv." The five papers presented at the symposium were submitted blind to a distinguished panel of faculty judges, and Brian's received the highest collective rating. Congratulations, Brian!

This year's Symposium featured five papers of outstanding quality and wide diversity of topic, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the event. Presenters were: Brendan Hughes (Theatre Arts, EIU); Brian Aycock (Theatre Arts, EIU); Andrew Moeggenborg (Theatre Arts, EIU); Amy Lipman (Theatre Arts, Univ. of Illinois); Erica Walker (English, EIU).

The panel of faculty judges included: Allison Cameron, Theatre Arts; Jerry Eisenhour, Theatre Arts; David Radavich, English; David Raybin, English.

2008 ONE-ACT TABLE READINGS

On January 29, 2008 two playwrights had their work presented in a public forum read by the Freshman Theatre Seminar students.

THE COULDABEEN HAMLET written by Joe Feinstein, an up-and-coming, 77-year-old playwright from The Bronx, opened the performance. Joe has taught high school and college English, and, as a psychologist, did substance abuse therapy. His short plays include productions in New York, South Dakota, Michigan and his one-act plays include, **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**, **BETTER THAN MONEY**, and **THE LAST OF THE AZTECS**. His latest comedy, **EMPTY SEAT ON THE MONEY TRAIN** received readings in Los Angeles, Michigan, and off-Broadway at Abingdon Theatre.

BEND AND BREAK: SOMEBODY LOVED ME ONCE by playwright Jake Senesac, a senior Theatre Arts major at Eastern Illinois University, although at the time this finds its way to the public has graduated, was also read. He has been seen in past EIU productions such as: **AS YOU LIKE IT**, **BALD SOPRANO**, and **A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM**. He can also be seen performing in EIU's improve troupe Hello Dali. He is a big fan of cake. This is the first play he has written, and if it goes well, not his last.

NASTY SOB'S



(L to R: Bailey Murphy, Rob Siebert, Leslie McGinnis, Tim Tholl (seated), Andrew Sutherland, Laura Black, Mariam Amr, Brian Aycock)

Director Jerry Eisenhour opened the Spring season February 22-26 with his presentation of **NASTY SOB'S: A Collection of Villains Despicable, Detestable, Vile, Depraved and Loathsome Yet Lovable**.

A selection of scenes, featuring some of the most famous villains in literary and theatrical history, included characters from **THE TRAGIC HISTORY OF DOCTOR FAUSTUS**, **TREASURE ISLAND**, **NIGHT MUST FALL**, **MACBETH**, **DRACULA**, **OTHELLO**, **HEDDA GABLER**, and **THE IMAGINARY INVALID** in the first act and continued in the second act with the company presenting scenes from **THE DRUNKARD**, **TARTUFFE**, **FASHION**, **CHICAGO**, and **THE MALTESE MOROCCAN GOLDFINCH**.

Overall, it was an enjoyable presentation with lots of clean, "booing" from the audience.



(Dr. Eisenhour directing these "villains")

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Justin Clouser (1971) – opened his own law practice in January 2007 and has completed his first year. He is a general, civil trial lawyer with emphasis on personal injury and wrongful death cases. He is also the court-appointed arbitrator for the courts in northern Nevada and the Lake Tahoe area. He states, “My theatre training has helped greatly in my trial presentation.”

Jena (Philips) Mertz (2001) and her husband James Mertz welcomed their first child into the world. Elizabeth Anne Mertz was born on December 12, 2007. Jena is now staying home to raise her family. Jena, James, Elizabeth and their two dogs live in Wildwood, Illinois.



“It's great to see what's happening back at school and hear how some of my old classmates are doing.”

Carrie (Braga) Contreras (1996) – is the Dean of Language Arts at De La Salle Institute in Chicago where she oversees English, Foreign Languages, Drama, Art, and Music. She gave birth to a son, Marc Anthony, on July 21, 2007. She would love to hear from people! You can e-mail her at carriecontreras@hotmail.com.



Peter Samuel (1980) – recent understudy to Tony Roberts in XANADU! on Broadway. His resume includes parts in Broadway productions: THE PRODUCERS, PARADE, KING DAVID, CATS, THE SECRET GARDEN, and many more. Television appearances include LAW & ORDER, SVU and CRIMINAL INTENT; SECRET LIVES OF DENTISTS; AND LATE SHOW W/DAVID LETTERMAN. In addition, he works off Broadway, with regional & stock theatres, does voice-overs, commercials, workshops, and readings.

Missing Classmates – if you know how to contact them, please let us know (dklewis@eiu.edu or jmsain@eiu.edu):

Anderson, Theresa (1993)
Arnold, Jason (1998)
Bhuvanti, Saovanut (1973)

Buck, Madeline (1971)
Christensen, Kurt (1985)
Coney-Jackson, Yvette (1975)
Copeland, Andre (1985)
Daniel, Karl (1984)
Elwell, Cathy (1968)
Field, Marie (2004)
Fort, Steffani (1993)
Goff, Erika (1997)
Graham, Lelan (1972)
Henderson, Nancy (1972)
Hendryx, Jeffrey (1969)
Hook, Leroy (1973)
Jines, Judith (1983)
Johnson, Mary (1973)
Linderman Green, Lynn (1968)
Lupo, Lynn (1983)
MacDonald, Sara (1967)
Miller, Darlene (1966)
Moore, Erin (1994)
Navolt, Mildred (1974)
Olsen, Edward (1978)
Prescott, Joyce (1973)
Reeves, Alana (1967)
Rodgers, Steven (1973)
Ryan, Janet (1983)
Sanders, Cynthia (1969)
Scott, Mary (1984)
Shepherd, Jill (1969)
Shieh, Tingku (1976)
Smith, Jacqueline (1974)
Soderberg, Leah (1968)
Wiermerslage, Paul (1993)
Winkleback, Mary (1970)



Some may remember Theresa Veglia Anderson's mural on the 2nd floor of Lawson Hall. Yes! it's still there and we'll miss seeing it as we hiked up the steps to the Theatre Offices on the 3rd floor of Lawson.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Nancy Slusser (1984)

My name is Nancy Slusser - and though I am married to Louis Tucci, I have kept my name.

I have been working professionally in the arts since graduation. I started in Chicago theatre and then moved to New York City 16 years ago.

I have worked in a variety of productions and finished a National Tour of *Menopause the Musical* this year and played the western states along with Anchorage, Alaska and Honolulu, Hawaii. I am back in New York right now performing a reading of a new musical called *The Soul Kitchen* at the Pearl Theatre. I leave in July to reprise my role as the Soap Star of *Menopause* at the GEVA Theatre in Rochester NY.

I was elected a principal Equity Councilor in 2006, so I am very active with the Actors Equity Association in New York City. I am a Tony Voter, so 'tis the season to be attending shows, and I will be casting my ballot soon.

In 2006, I finished a workshop production of *Max & Ruby*, composer Carol Hall (*The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*), I did the world premiere in NYC Spring of 2007.

I appeared as a back up singer for Enya in November 2006 on national television for NBC and the Rockefeller Tree Lighting Ceremony.

My husband is an actor musician and we have been writing music together. One of his songs is featured on the Wes Craven movie, *Scream*.

Louis and I worked on *Warrior* at the prestigious Eugene O'Neill Theatre Conference summer 2006 and then were a part of the show when it was presented in the 2006 New York Musical Theatre Festival fall 2006. Grammy winner, Marcus Hummon, (*God Bless The Broken Road*), was the author of *Warrior*, a piece about the life of Jim Thorpe, the famous half Indian athlete of the early 20th century.

Louis and I also performed in a cabaret with Marcus Hummon, Deven May (Bat Boy fame), and others at the famous Birdland Jazz Club in a show entitled *Broadway meets Country* in September 2006. Besides that - I did two Joseph Jefferson Award winning shows in Chicago years ago

I also traveled the world with my own cabaret act, hitting the far east, Hawaii and Tahiti on such luxury ships as *The Seabourn Spirit* and *Radisson's Paul Gauguin*. I have worked twice in Japan - once doing improv in Japanese - pretty funny! It was at a Dutch resort near Nagasaki, and I had to pretend I was Dutch. And, my voice can be heard on children's recordings and commercials.

My husband and I live at a two tower Artist's complex in the heart of Times Square. It is called Manhattan Plaza. I do attend EIU Alumni events in NYC, when I am in town. I am in contact with Sal Viviano and see him and Liz around town.

Quite a varied journey, but such is the life in theatre.



Nancy Slusser is welcomed back to the EIU Theatre Dept., February 2007.



Nancy looks over the display in memory of Lucy Paquette Gabbard.



Nancy took time from her visit to Charleston to speak with Theatre students about her career and the work she has had since graduating.

(If you'd like to be featured in the Alumni Spotlight, contact Damita Lewis, dklewis@eiu.edu)

THE TRUE STORY OF THE THREE LITTLE PIGS



(L to R: Elizabeth Powers, Richard Guss, playwright Robert Kauzlaric, Aubrey Wiggs (seated), Caitlin Bieda)

A classic story told from the “other” side was brought to life with puppets and actors April 7-12 for daily performances for the local schools and weekend performances for the public.

The book and lyrics were written by Robert Kauzlaric and music by Paul Gilvary and William Rush. The play was adapted from the book **THE TRUE STORY OF THE THREE LITTLE PIGS** by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith, (copyright ©1989 by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith).

Since this was the first performance outside the Chicago area, playwright Robert Kauzlaric came down to see the show on Friday night.

The humorous presentation was enjoyed by children and adults.



(Puppets telling their side as the wolf hovers above.)

ALUMNI SEASON...

It is the end of May and if you follow what is happening in the papers the State Government in Springfield is beginning its annual budget squabble. Eastern is expecting a flat line budget or worse, a cut in state appropriations. All of this comes at a time when the Department of Theatre Arts is preparing to move home to the renovated Doudna.

Tight budgets, rising costs, more students and larger spaces will mean that the department will have to look for help wherever it can find it. Theatre Arts alums have been, and continue to be, generous with their time, gifts and support. All of this is appreciated.

As Chair, I am very proud of the work each of you has accomplished, and I look forward to returning to campus to continue training another generation of theatre artists. I am asking, challenging, you to be a part of this effort.

I would like to have the annual production season be named the Theatre Arts Alumni Production Season. The vision I have is that the entire production season be supported by you, our graduates. This would give each of you ownership in the future of the program. How is this possible? It really won't take much of an individual sacrifice but in total the outcome could be significant.

Each of us has our own set of vices we develop. Mine is coffee! Currently the alumni list for theatre boasts of 300

graduates. A cup of coffee or tea averages about \$2.00 a cup (a tall Pike, leave room, is mine at Starbucks). If each of you would give up one cup of coffee a week and make that donation to the production season that would equal \$104.00 for the year.

Insignificant? Perhaps. That is if you work alone. If all 300 of you were to make the same donation, one cup of tea or coffee a week, the total would be \$31,200! That would cover all production costs and provide money to purchase equipment for the shops.

Are you, we, up to the challenge?



(New entrance to the Doudna Fine Arts Center. Theatre is to the right)



(Summer crew works on cleaning out and arranging the Theatre storage unit, located near O'Brien Stadium)

**WHAT'S ON THE STAGE
IN THE
DOUDNA FINE ARTS
CENTER THEATRES
FALL 2008**

ARSENIC AND OLD LACE, directed by Clarence Blanchette opens "The Theatre" on October 3-7 (see more on pg 1). Mr. Blanchette will bring the theatre to life with this classic filled with surprises. Don't miss this opportunity to see the opening performance in the new theatre and to meet with fellow alumni as the classes of 1995-2002 return to celebrate.

MEDEA, directed by Jean Wolski, opens the Black Box Theatre to the public November 14-18. The story of the jealousy and revenge of a woman betrayed by her husband is a timeless treasure as valid today as it was when first performed in 431 B.C.

The STUDENT DIRECTED ONE-ACTS will open the Movement Studio as a theatre venue December 5-7. Be prepared to enjoy the hard work of these aspiring directors as they put their education to the test.



(ARSENIC AND OLD LACE production from Fall 1988 directed by Clarence Blanchette)

FRIENDS OF THE THEATRE

(donations made after Jan. 1, 2008)

Producer \$175 or more

Jaqueline Bennett Dance Center	Barry Johnson	Alex & Susan Peck	Bill & Carol Strode
Jon & Lynn Collins	Ron & Nancy Kruzic	James M. Romanovich	Walt Disney Enterprises
Rita, Tony & Clare Esposito	Blair & Christine Lord	Kevin & Nancy Reed	West Community
Fredd Gunzel	Shirley Moore	John & Juanita Roberts	Partnership Program
Vaughn & Ruth Jaenike	John T. Oertling	J. Sain	

Director \$125+ Associate Director \$100+ Stage Manager \$75+

Cheryl & Ralph Jones	Dr. & Mrs. Stephen Blue	Dave & Tricia File	Scott & Penny Crawford
	Bonnie Butler	Bonnie Irwin & Ned Huston	
	Jeff & Ann Cross	Richard Rogers	

Your support is playing an increasingly important role in funding our program and the quality it affords. As appropriations from the state are cut and inflation continues its dizzy spiral, patron support becomes a necessity. Your voluntary donations are necessary to our success in supporting a service to the community, campus and region. Please take a moment to fill out the attached form and return with your pledge or check. Your generosity is appreciated.

Make checks payable to: **Eastern Illinois University** Pledge Amount \$ _____
Mail Checks to: **University Theatre, 600 Lincoln Avenue, Charleston, IL 61920-3099**

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Name _____ Class _____

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Would you like to receive the newsletter electronically yes no

MAIL TO: Department of Theatre Arts, Eastern Illinois University, 600 Lincoln Avenue, Charleston, IL 61920 or email dklewis@eiu.edu or jtoertling@eiu.edu.