NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

Anthony Pingitore

SUMMER 2013

Welcome to summer 2013. We are at the midpoint of our 2013 season and I am very excited to report that our first two mainstage shows were financially successful despite the relatively small audiences and that we look forward to terrific audiences for our summer musical “THE MUSIC MAN.”

We recently conducted a special event presented by the Playwrights Alliance of Pennsylvania. Jen Feldser has written an insightful review of the event which was well received. The association was very pleased with the hospitality and reception by the folks at Hershey Area Playhouse and intends to come back in 2014.

We are continuing to report continuing tributes for Theresa Ridge from friends and associates that she encountered during her devoted service to Hershey Area Playhouse. Theresa was a dear personal friend to many of us in the organization and she impacted many actors and volunteers over the years. She was our lighting designer since the beginning and will permanently light our theatre with her memorial plaque at the top of the stairs just to the right of our theatre entrance. Please note the date of our special event in September honoring Theresa with some of her favorite musicals.

In June, we completed our summer Theatre Academy Camp with record attendance. Our congratulations go to Cory Wilkerson, Jen Feldser, Jill Panyard and Laurie Miller Peterson for their dedicated effort to this educational program.

In July, the Hershey Area Playhouse will join forces with the M.S. Hershey Foundation in a week long summer camp which will culminate in a July 26th performance of “Alice in Wonderland” in the Hershey Gardens.

On July 18th, we begin performances of “THE MUSIC MAN” which will be directed by Eric Mansilla and Tracey Ford. As a member of the cast, please be assured that this team of 60 plus volunteers has put together an extremely entertaining show of this classic Meredith Willson musical.

Don’t miss it! It is a wonderful story of a community coming together to deal with change during a time of great turmoil; in our country. You’ll leave with a warm smile and whistling or humming some marvelous tunes. Most importantly, you’ll see some of the finest amateur acting and production talent in central Pennsylvania.

Don’t forget to read the section on our Kids corner where we feature Ezra Smith who plays Winthrop in our production of “THE MUSIC MAN.”

Thanks again for all you have done and all you have yet to do to support our theatre. We truly appreciate your continued volunteer support whether it be your time or your financial contribution to reduce our building debt.

IMPORTANT NOTE TO ALL HERSHEY AREA PLAYHOUSE PATRONS - CREDIT CARD USE

BY JEFF MILLER

We regret to inform you that our ticket vendor, Vendini, Incorporated detected an unauthorized intrusion into their systems this spring. This incident may have affected our member’s patrons who used credit cards for an event that was purchased through our website and Vendini’s ticketing system. Vendini believes that in late March of 2013 a third-party criminal used hacking technologies to access their databases and may have accessed personal information such as name, mailing address, email address, phone number and credit card numbers and expiration dates that belong to our patrons. Please note: Vendini does NOT collect credit card security access codes (CVV2, PINs) or social security numbers, patrons usernames or passwords.

Vendini deeply regrets this incident and has instituted enhanced security procedures designed to prevent a recurrence of this type of incident. At this time, Vendini does not believe that this incident has affected any sales after April 25, 2013.

If you purchased tickets from the Hershey Area Playhouse and used a credit card in the months of March and April, we encourage you to check your credit card statements and, if you notice any unusual activity, immediately notify your credit card issuer.
Trouble is coming to Hershey Area Playhouse.

Yes, it seems like a clichéd way to open an article about Meredith Willson’s The Music Man, but it is a hard line to resist. And perhaps that very fact is one that speaks to the reasons that this musical has become such a beloved part of theatrical history.

Like any great musical, The Music Man offers us music that sticks with us. But, somehow this particular show has left an indelible mark on our culture. It’s hard to find anyone that doesn’t know at least snippets of classic songs like “Ya Got Trouble,” “76 Trombones,” or “Til There Was You.” The fact is that these songs, among others, have become so ingrained in our shared American experience that they are well known even among those unfamiliar with the show itself.

So, how does one little Broadway show leave a mark so deep?

To me the answer is an easy one once you start looking at the show itself and the man behind it. The Music Man was a labor of love. That’s not to say that Rodgers and Hammerstein didn’t pour their souls into their work, but The Music Man is different. Willson was giving us a glimpse into the American experience he remembered from his boyhood. The characters, the setting, the overall feel of the show are a window into turn of the century Iowa through the eyes of someone who lived it. Willson even talks of the show being a Valentine to his beloved home town.
Thus we have the greatness of The Music Man, but also the trouble (so to speak). The things that make this show great also make it a show that requires great things from its cast and crew. It requires those who are passing this Valentine on to yet another American community to treat it with the same care and dedication that Willson himself did when he wrote it.

So, the question becomes: are we doing that? And the answer, I would humbly submit, is a resounding YES! Tracey Ford and Eric Mansilla have lived this show for months. It has been a companion for them as they prepared their vision. It has been with them as they carefully helped to select a production team that would bring passion to their positions. And, above all, it has been with them as they have cast the show and begun rehearsals.

The Music Man may very well be the ideal show for a community theater. Not because of any of the technical or theatrical issues of the show, but because of the heart of the show itself.

This is a story of community. It is a story of individuals finding a voice that they didn’t even know they wanted, much less had in them all along. And isn’t that what community theater is all about?

And our production is a true reflection of this spirit. The cast is a true mixing of Playhouse veterans and newcomers. The production team is a combination of experienced individuals working in familiar positions and individuals experiencing the summer musical in a whole new way. We have truly sought to make our little production family a microcosm of the communities of which the Playhouse is a part.

The end result of all of this will be a spectacle that you won’t want to miss. There will be rousing music. There will be enchanting dance. You will see a master swindler at his peak. You will witness love blossom in the unlikeliest of places. And you will learn a thing or two about Gary, Indiana.

But, perhaps most importantly, you will walk out of the theater with those songs and those moments imprinted in your memory, reminding you what is so great about being a part of the things we take for granted every day.

Yes, trouble may be coming, after all. With so much on offer, tickets may be hard to get!
We continue our tribute to our dear friend Theresa. Recently, a permanent memorial has been placed on the wall by the entrance to the Theatre. Below are some memories from some of her colleagues and friends.

I remember the conversation right before this picture was taken. I ran out of gas on my way up to the Country Club. I was going over the words for my song in the car and got to the lyric "Everything's going my way" when irony struck. I ran out of gas and began rolling backward down the hill. I hopped a curb and put the thing in park as another car was coming up the hill, so I didn't hit it. It was Pete and Theresa. I was telling the story to Jen when the two of them walked in and Theresa heard me. "Oh, that was YOU!!" she said, "Then I take back the choice words I had for the driver that nearly backed up into us!" I asked her if I even wanted to know what she had to say. She assured me I did not.

~Eric Mansilla

My favorite part of stage managing "The Crucible" was getting to know Theresa via headset from my station backstage to hers in the light booth. It was the beginning of our friendship, and even now, I like to think I can hear her laughter, from some unseen place, ringing in my ear.

~Pam Waters

I got to direct Theresa Ridge. I could stop there. Theresa, or as I called her on headset-Xena, came to me when I was about direct The Vagina Monologues and asked if she could perform one. I don't think I had ever seen her nervous before in my life; she had some jitters. Yet, no surprise, she went on with the show. When an audience member playfully responded during her monologue, she was momentarily flustered. I know. Flustered!? Her cracking up, breaking character, was infectious and it's the first thing that comes to mind whenever I think of her.

~Jan Feldser

Even when our lights are up full they will always be a little dimmer.

~Don Bowman

It's never easy to say goodbye to someone with whom you have shared a passion like we've all shared with our friend, Theresa. No words can express or salve the pain. She was our friend, our mentor, our rock at the Playhouse. She will be sorely missed, but we all know our lives are better because we knew her.

~Jeffery Miller

What can one say about a person like Theresa? She was very serious about her work and her craft and could seem intimidating, but one could see the sparkle in her eye and know that her seriousness was a reflection of her dedication to doing it right. She devoted many hours to Hershey Area Playhouse. The theatre construction had her undivided attention to detail and now our community enjoys the benefit of her devotion. She was so proficient at lighting design, one might think it was easy. Her meticulousness and attention to detail was legendary. She dedicated untold hours as treasurer and kept us on track financially. We have lost a good friend and valuable member of the Hershey Area Playhouse community.

~John Messmer

We will be hosting a Cabaret Night for the Theresa Ridge Memorial Fund. On Saturday, September 21, beginning at 7pm we will have light refreshments followed by a musical montage. The Cabaret portion features songs from Theresa's favorite musicals of both stage and screen. Tickets are $25 and available on hersheyareaplayhouse.com

"...one could see the sparkle in her eye and know that her seriousness was a reflection of her dedication to doing it right."
On Sunday June 16th, The Playwright's Alliance of PA presented an evening of original works. Playwrights Alliance of Pennsylvania is a not-for-profit organization created by playwrights for the benefit of playwrights. Its mission is to serve, support and promote playwrights in their dual goals of writing quality plays and seeing those plays produced. The group serves playwrights living in the Central Pennsylvania area encompassed by Harrisburg, Carlisle, York, and Lebanon, PA.

This particular event, entitled "Storm Stories," this collection of original works take an insightful look at the way people behave when faced with the threat of a major storm. Five local playwrights- Marjorie Bicknell, Barbara Trainin Blank, Cindy Rock Dlugolecki, Randy Gross and Paul Hood were inspired to write these plays based on the frequency with which such storms have hit the east coast and Central Pennsylvania in particular in recent years. Each one takes a unique - and often humorous - look at the way people behave and the secrets that pop out during trying times.

The plays were performed in a staged reading style in which the actors performed the show with script in hand, but used the full stage, basic lights and sound, and limited props and sets to create the world of the play. Lori Myers a local actress, director and playwright and Kevin Pry, President of PAPA and a well-known actor, director and theatre educator directed the five plays.

The event was attended by approximately thirty people. The "PAPA" people said that they were very pleased by the Playhouse's hospitality and plan on coming back next year with more, new works.
The kids adapted and wrote their own mysteries, as well as acting out an old fashion radio play—complete with sound effects.

Our summer theater camps have always been our most highly attended, but we think summer breaks a record! We have over fifty campers in our three sessions. Over two weeks June 10-21, we have been introducing students from grades 1-12 to a variety of theater conventions and styles.

Our youngest kiddoes, in grades 1-3, played games that brought out their actor's tools of body, mind, voice, and imagination. We read well know and little know fairy tales, which the children acted out and then ultimately created their own versions!

In grades 4-6, the students examined the era melodrama! The students learned the poses, gestures and stock characters of the genre. They went on to write their own, with a healthy dose of stage combat thrown in! Boo! Hiss! But ultimately, Hurrah!!

Our eldest class were supposed to explore scenes and monologues by famous American authors. Instead, their interests steered the class work toward mystery and film noir. The kids adapted and wrote their own mysteries, as well as acting out an old fashion radio play—complete with sound effects.

All of these works were fully staged complete with costumes and lights in front of a full house of friends and family. We hope to see them again when classes resume in September.

Hershey Area Playhouse Teams with the Hershey Gardens on a Theater Camp for Kids [Alice in Wonderland photo attached]

The Playhouse is pleased to partner with M.S. Hershey Foundation for a unique blend of theater and ambiance. From July 22-26, Hershey Gardens will host a weeklong camp which will culminate in a performance of Alice in Wonderland in the amphitheater located in the children's garden. This project is helmed by Laurie Miller Petersen - a graduate of Northwestern University’s esteemed theatre program and has been an industry professional in New York City for many years; Laurie brings knowledge of all facets of theatre. A performer as well as a director/fight director, her experiences range from outdoor theatre to motion pictures. Petersen fight directed a few scenes from Shakespeare for an event at the Gardens last year and was asked to coordinate a children's camp. She promptly called the Playhouse Theater Academy's lead teacher, Cory Wilkerson.

There were a limited number of slots for this camp and they have all sold out. However, the final performance is open to the public. It will be in the evening of July 26, included the admission to the Gardens. We hope you'll join us for this singular experience through the looking glass!
1. **How did you get interested in theatre?**
At first I wasn’t into things like theatre. I honestly forget what I was into. But then I started to go to the theatre at DeSales University and I remember one of the first times I went there they had a production of “Snow White and the 7 Dwarfs” and after the show we got to see the actors and I told the actress who played the Evil Queen that I could be her henchman and she said to me something along the lines of “Thank you! I really ought to fire my old henchman. He has no skills.” and that really got me into acting.

2. **What other ‘skills’ do you have and that you have maybe taken classes on to help you?**
Well, I do martial arts, play trumpet, sing in the school chorus, and I am a Boy Scout. I started taking theatre classes at the Hershey Playhouse after my 11th birthday.

3. **What shows have you participated in?**
I am currently in the Music Man and I have been in church pageants, and I have been in a few concerts (one at the inauguration ceremony for the new children’s hospital) for school things like Band, Jazz Band, Chorus and County Chorus. But this is my first production and I am pretty lucky getting a role like Winthrop.

4. **What’s your favorite thing about doing theatre?**
That’s a hard question because there are lots of things I like about theatre, but I have to say my favorite part of doing theatre is making new friends.

5. **What do you find the hardest/most challenging thing about theatre?**
Remembering my lines. That is sometimes a pain in the neck but it pays off.

6. **What has been your favorite role/character so far?**
My favorite role so far is Winthrop but it’s my first role in a production so it’s my only role outside of church or school so I get to meet lots of new people and make new friends.

7. **What other areas of theatre are you interested in trying or doing?**
I would like to try a play by Shakespeare. I love how he says things, like: “To be, or not to be: that is the question.”

8. **Do you have a dream role or show you would like to do, what is it?**
I would love to be in a lot of musicals, but my dream role currently is Jean Valjean, a character in Les Misérables, a great show (but for older audiences).

9. **If you were going to encourage other kids to do theatre, what would you say?**
Do what you are best at. Be yourself. You’ll find a show that is right for you. And just keep doing theatre and you might even get to perform on Broadway!
Calendar

The Music Man ................................................................. July 18-28, 2013
Twelfth Night ................................................................. August 14-18, 2013
Shine a Light: Cabaret Night for Theresa Ridge .................. September 21, 2013
The Ghost Train ............................................................. October 10 - 20, 2013
A Christmas Carol ......................................................... December 5 - 15, 2013

Visit HersheyAreaPlayhouse.com for the most up-to-date calendar listings.