PLAYBILL

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TWIN LAKES PLAYHOUSE

Over the River and Through the Woods– A Comedy of Family and Eccentricities

Front: Sue Howe, Steve Stanley, Darcy Sherrod, Bill Simpson. Back: Rebecca Northcroft, Jason Darr.

Twin Lakes Playhouse's newest comedy, "Over the River and Through the Woods" by Joe DiPietro, directed by Shirley Spitzer, has been cast and is in rehearsal, set to open our 2013-2014 Season on September 6 and runs for three weekends.

Nick is a single, Italian-American guy from New Jersey who has dinner with his grandparents every Sunday night. Everybody has to leave home, but how do you leave without leaving? And more importantly, how do you say good-bye when your family won't let you go?

One of the major themes of this play is the Italian phrase, "Tango Famiglia." In Italian it means, "I am a man, I am doing well for my woman and my children, I have a reason for being alive, the idea being that every man must at some point in his life embark on a mission to start a career and a family." But when Nick decides to take a promotion that would move him to Seattle his grandparents fight to keep him in New Jersey!

Although this play deals with generational conflict, and the hurt and sorrow of the loss of family, it is also filled with a tremendous amount of love. This play shows that love can overcome obstacles, like Nick moving away from his grandparents. It also shows that love is what's holding the family together despite all the hilarity of how Nick's grandparents interact with each other.

The cast includes:

Jason Darr as Nick Cristano
Bill Simpson as Nunzio Cristano
Sue Howe as Aida Cristano
Steve Stanley as Frank Gianelli
Darcy Sherrod as Emma Gianelli
Rebecca Northcroft as Caitlin O'Hare

Once again, we have added two new members through the casting of this play and welcomed back two resident actors. Steve Stanley and Rebecca Northcroft are both making their acting debut. Bill Simpson, who has been on a short hiatus, has returned. And Darcy Sherrod, who moved for a year to Las Vegas, has returned to the Ozarks and TLP. And let's not forget Sue Howe (most recently in "12 Angry Jurors" and Jason Darr who played Arthur in "Hyronomous A. Frog, the Frog Prince." All are very welcome to the TLP boards.

Assisted by Angie Cotter, Shirley is busy with rehearsals while in a neck brace– you can ask her what happened, it's a funny story. Sets are up and painting done. As with all shows, excitement is in the air and expectations for our season opener are high.

Members' Night is scheduled for September 4. Our benefit recipient is Volunteer Low Cost Spay and Neuter Clinic and that performance is September 5, with opening the following night. There will be a Wine and Cheese Open House opening night for those attending that performance.

Please come and join in the laughter. I'm sure volunteers are needed for the usual jobs, too, so expect a call!

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MEETING TIMES

BOARD MEETING, August 12, 2013 6:00 P.M. **MEMBERS' MEETING, August 19, 2013, 7:00 P.M.**

Setting the Stage *by John Eberhard*

Negative Comments

Jim Smith, Carol, and I are in a social facebook group together. Carol had made mention of TLP and one of the members of the group had this to offer:

"I've had two terrible experiences with the playhouse and I want to give them another chance but just can't. Auditioned for a part, people told me I was great and hilarious and I was the only person to audition for it. He gave it to someone else who didn't even want it. They also gave away our reserved seats to a show and we sat separately in crap seats. I'm sure they mean well but they are screw ups and I really want to like that place too.

It was the part for the obnoxious full-of-himself newscaster put on film for a play a while back. I was the only one to audition for it and people loved it! He can't give the part to someone without an audition! Even Sarah Silverman wouldn't do that for her sister with The Sarah Silverman show on TV! It was her sister Laura! And she had to audition just like anyone else! What a terribly unprofessional man that was. And he got all uncomfortable because he knew people liked me but wanted to go with someone else. It was awful."

What can you say? He was right. If we are honest with ourselves, we will acknowledge that. The seating changeover was an absolute nightmare that went on for production after production after production. The foresight, training, and planning that needed to go into a smooth transition was nonexistent.

Sometimes we have directors who will forgo perfectly acceptable auditioners to give a role to a friend...of course, other times, the auditioner who thought he was so wonderful really wasn't wonderful at all, and directors have other considerations when casting.

The answer to the above question, "What can you say?" is what Jim Smith replied to this fellow. I hope we are all this gracious and this honest when dealing with this sort of negative reaction to TLP. Jim said:

"Carol is our Senior Director and teaches a class on directing. They don't all do it the same way. I have been there for 20 years now and sometimes don't get a part when I audition. As far as seating is concerned, TLP is a nonprofit enterprise and no one gets paid. Sometimes people volunteer to do more than they are qualified to do. When that happens we try to correct it as quickly as possible but on occasion people don't get served the way they want. When that happens, as it has with you, it makes us look bad and we apologize. The vast majority of people have nothing but excellent experiences with the TLP. I will make it up to you by seeing to it that you have two free tickets to a play of your choice. Let me know what play you want to attend and what night/day you want to be there and you will have two tickets for that play. Give me at least two weeks notice so we don't sell out your night. Thank you for this input. We strive to do the best we can, as a community theatre, and sometimes that isn't good enough. We want to serve our community well and when mistakes are made, we try to correct them when we can. I hope this will bring you back to us as we do want you to return."

Great formula, Jim. Acknowledge, Apologize, make Amends. A triple-A response. Go you.

Note to us: sometimes I wish we would invest more planning and foresight in order to get a fewer things done, but done right when they are done. There are too many people who have had unnecessarily bad experiences with us because we have not done our preparation well in our headlong determination to over reach. The flip side of that, of course, is that the only people who don't make mistakes are the people who don't do anything. I hope some day we obtain a better balance between the two.

The Three R's of Playreading *from communitytheatre.org*

Reading It

OK, so you've perused the catalogs and ordered some plays that won't stretch the resources of your group to the breaking point. What do you look for while you're reading it?

First of all, if you're an actor, take off your actor's hat. Too often we actors get enthusiastic about a play because there's a part in there that we'd kill to play, and we neglect to notice that while that one part is really well-written, the rest of it is awful, or the lighting requirements are impossible, or the subject matter is too banal or too controversial, or whatever. One good part does not make a show. Remember, you're trying to decide if this play is good for your group to do.

Second, you have to read the WHOLE thing, not just the lines. This includes the cast of characters, author's notes, stage directions, everything. Start with the cast of characters, and read any descriptions the author might have provided. Do there seem to be any special requirements there - age range, foreign accents, physical attributes like great strength or a weight problem? Make note of those, especially any that might cause a problem, and move on to the setting. What is the locale? How is the room laid out? Any special set pieces needed? How many entrances and exits? Is there more than one floor? If there's a set diagram provided in the back, check it out, then try to imagine the set in your head - this will help you to visualize the action as you read.

As you read, notice any technical requirements, which are generally referred to in the stage directions. Be on the lookout for the following:

- Unusual costumes, props or set pieces that may have to be made, rented or borrowed
- Special effects (smoke, fire, disappearing objects, gun fired on stage, etc.)

- Quick set changes
- Costume changes
- Specialty lighting
- Unusual sound cues

Notice how the dialog and stage directions advance the plot. With a good play, you should answer "yes" to the following questions:

- Is an interesting problem or theme set out within the first few pages?
- Does the action flow with a natural and believable progression (is it making sense)?
- Are the language and situations appropriate for your target audience?
- Do you want to know what's going to happen next?
- Is it making you laugh or chuckle? (for comedies)
- Are you interested in why the characters are behaving as they are? (especially true for dramas/murder mysteries)

Pay attention to the characters as well. If they're well written, you should answer "yes" to the following questions:

- Are the characters interesting?
- Are they original? (as opposed to stereotypes)
- Do you care about the characters?
- Do their words and actions paint a picture for you of what they're like?

Read the play all the way to the end (including any stage directions that follow the last line of dialog). With a good play, you should be able to answer "yes" to the following:

- Was the ending believable?
- Did it surprise you or make you think?
- Did the author take time to tie up all the loose ends?
- Would you want to read more of this author's plays?

To sum it up, ask yourself the following:

- Did you like it?
- Can you cast it?
- Can you build the set?
- Can your group handle the technical requirements?

And finally, the most important question, unless you've got a generous funding source that doesn't rely on ticket sales: Will your audience pay good money to see it?

Ratin' It

It's difficult to objectively rate a play - after all, how do you quantify words, ideas, feelings and reactions? After several years of wrestling with this problem, our playreading committee at the Kent County Theatre Guild eventually came up with a list of ratings for a set of criteria that a play must meet in order to be approved for production. While still subjective, they have given us an indication of a play's worth that's a little more reliable than "I loved it!" or "I hated it!" The most subjective part of the evaluation, the one that asks the question, "Is this a good play?," focuses on content.

We rate each play on a scale of 1 to 5 in six areas:

- **Action**
  1= story was dull; 5 = highly interesting plot
- **Characterizations**
  1=most characters undeveloped/dull; 5= highly-developed/ interesting characters
- **Suspense/Dramatic Impact**
  1= fell asleep reading it; 5= couldn't wait to see how it ends
- **Plot Development**
  1= disjointed/ confusing/ unbelievable; 5=plot twists are expertly handled and neatly resolved
- **Entertainment Value**
  1=none; 5 = highly entertaining/amusing
- **Educational Value**
  1= none; 5 = intellectually challenging for actors and audiences

Note that comedies frequently rate high in entertainment value and low in educational value, while dramas are usually the opposite. These two areas usually balance each other out.

The content ratings are then averaged to give an overall content rating. When several people read and rate the same play (we require at least three playreading committee members to read a play for it to be considered), their overall content ratings are then averaged to come up with a group content rating. Plays that receive a group content rating of three or higher are considered decent plays that we should think about approving. And directors fight for plays that receive a 4.5 or more!

Content, however, is only part of the picture. Reviewers also report on cast size and any areas that may pose casting difficulties, technical requirements, and level of difficulty (where 1 is a play that's suitable for a new director and/or inexperienced actors, and 5 is a play that should only be attempted by an experienced director and cast). Audience appeal is another vital area to be considered in evaluating a play. Is it suitable for children or should it be performed mainly for an adult audience? Is there a controversial theme? Sexual innuendo? Profanity? All of these can enter into a decision about whether the play is or is not suitable for your audience.

Finally, there's the reviewer's overall opinion and recommendation. It's a subjective summary, to be sure, but can often be the tool to use in deciding whether your group wants to recommend a play for production or not.

Ritin' It Up

Now you need to evaluate the play. There are many forms available that allow you to rate each play according to the suggestions already discussed. Or perhaps your community theatre already has something in place. However you do it, by current form or by getting one on-line, it is imperative that a form be filled out by each person reading the play and submitted with a recommendation. If there is no recommendation, the play should be put on the shelf and the evaluation form kept with it in case someone else suggests adding the play to a future season. You don't have to reinvent the wheel.

TWIN LAKES PLAYHOUSE

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Twin Lakes Playhouse is an ever-evolving community theatre, adding new and innovative ideas to our Season, with musicals, children's theatre, youth, teen and adult acting workshops, director, and improvisation workshops. We are always looking for interested members to participate in all aspects of producing plays. Community theatre is a great outlet for both children and adults, a safe place to create and wrangle your imagination. We also award a scholarship each year to a qualified student who wishes to continue their education in some aspect of the performing arts. And we have an active Benefit Program for local organizations.

We're on the Web
twinlakesplayhouse.org

Reminders

from John Eberhard

When Carol and I were recently out of town, we watched a production which was done in a town of comparable size to Mountain Home. While I didn't learn anything new, it provided several reminders of some things that make all the difference between doing average theatre and below average theatre.

This show was below average. Way below average. The reasons can be laid at both the door of poor directing and poor acting technique.

Let me share some of the reminders provided by this show with TLP directors.

If you bring your characters out on stage in a line, plant them in one spot, and don't give them movement, then you don't give your show life. Lack of movement is lack of energy and puts your audience to sleep. It is so frustrating to watch an actor desperately trying to give life to a scene while being hog-tied by being in one spot.

Don't play everything, or even a whole lot of scenettes, down front and center. It is boring and gives everything the same emphasis, so in the end, no scene has emphasis. Ugh.

Learn the meaning of "ensemble performance." Create one.

Use hairstyles and makeup to help establish time/ geographic locations. I'm sorry, but 2013 USA hairstyles on blonde Caucasians don't do much to establish Thailand in the 1860s. Who knew, right?

Be aware and pay attention to details. For instance, if the audience can see under your curtain, have the folks setting the scene behind it wear black---which is less noticeable and less distracting---than white pants and white tennies. When they come on stage to move set pieces, have them wear clothing that doesn't make a statement. Again, it is distracting.

Let me share some reminders for actors:

Pick up your cues!!! An already lifeless show can be reduced to the pace of a snail crawling uphill through molasses by not picking up cues.

Be involved in what is going on onstage, don't just wait for your turn to speak. In this production, an entrance was missed. Everyone just stood around waiting until finally the lead left the stage to wake up the stage manager to find the missing character and to get him on stage. Folks, you need to be involved enough that when things go South for whatever reason you can create dialogue and action until it gets straightened out. You can't just stand there with your face hanging out waiting for somebody to do something. You need to be that somebody....which means you have to be able to improvise and ad lib based on the current situation in that scene.

It isn't enough to walk to your appointed spot and quote your lines. You need to use gestures, facial expressions, and a varied vocal delivery as a minimum.

Do not break character. Do not speak to the audience in a show utilizing the fourth wall convention, which is most shows.

Have fun. If you're not having fun up there, the audience isn't having fun out there watching you.

AUDITIONS for "Little Women" will be held on September 14 @ 12:30 P.M. and September 15 @ 5:30 P.M. at the playhouse. Directed by Deb Smith. Cast: 8F, 4M.

The cast includes: **Females:** Mrs. March- "Marmee", middle-aged; Hannah- housekeeper, middle-aged; Aunt March, wealthy aunt, older; the sisters: Meg– age 17-18; Jo– age 16-17; Beth– age 15-16; Amy– age 12-13. **Males:** Mr. March– middle-aged; Mr. Laurence– older gentleman; Mr. Brooks– age 22-25; and Laurie– age 17-18.

Based on the classic book written by Louisa May Alcott and adapted to the stage by Peter Clapham, it is an exploration into the lives of the March family in Massachusetts during the Civil War, how they coped with their hardships through laughter, devotion to each other, and friendship with others. This is a period drama full of the passion for life. The characters are well-defined, interesting, and heartwarming. It emphasizes family, values, friendship, charity, love, acceptance, and understanding. Auditions are open. There will be a cold reading. Please share this information with your friends so they may have the opportunity to audition as well. Contact Deb Smith with questions at 421-4026.