

TROUPERS

The Newsletter of Peninsula Players Community Theatre Company – December 2011

PP plans famous farce for Spring 2012



There's something poisonous going on at Peninsula Players. Murder most foul is afoot at Memory Hall in Grimsby.

Thirty years old this year, your community theatre company has dug up the basement and disinterred one of the most-loved farces of all time. *Arsenic and Old Lace*, written by Joseph Kesselring, opened in 1941 and ran in New York City for nearly 1,500 performances. It was succeeded in 1944 by director Frank Capra's immensely successful film version starring Cary Grant.

"We wanted a sure-fire hit for our anniversary year," said Debbie Sirianni, founder and newly elected president of PP. "We know it's a winner with audiences and actors alike because we produced it 20 years ago in Smithville."

Performance dates will be March 23, 24, 25, 30, 31, and April 1.

"The biggest challenge is going to be finding 15 cast members, most of them men, and maybe a Cary Grant look-alike to play Mortimer Brewster," said Ms. Sirianni, who directed the 1992 version and will repeat the feat in 2012. "We'll hold auditions in Memory Hall at 7:30 on December 7 and 8."

The crazy Brewster family lives in a creepy old house. Drama critic Mortimer Brewster visits his sweet but scary spinster aunts, Abby and Martha, and discovers they've developed the "very bad habit" of snuffing out the lives of lonely bachelors with a glass of elderberry wine laced with arsenic, strychnine, and just a pinch of cyanide. Crazy brother Teddy Roosevelt Brewster buries what he believes are yellow fever victims in the basement.

In 1941, the New York Times said in its opening night review of the play, it is "so funny that none of us will ever forget it." We feel sure you'll agree.

Actors needed for A-Cappella-Fellas

The sweet sounds of four unaccompanied male singers were heard November 18 at our Gala Wine and Cheese and Opening Night of *The Affections of May*. Next May, the local singing group plans its own show with several skits by PP actors to spice up the song. Want to know more? Leave a message at debsirianni@hotmail.com.

Events Calendar

- Auditions for *Arsenic and Old Lace*, December 7 and 8 at 7:30 pm, Memory Hall, Trinity United Church, Grimsby.
- Play dates: March 23, 24, 25, 30, 31, and April 1.
- Production meet for *Arsenic*: Mon. Jan. 16, 7:30, library.

Sirianni elected president at AGM



At our June Annual General Meeting, Debbie Sirianni returned to the office of President of Peninsula Players, almost 30 years after she and other original members founded the community theatre. Some early rehearsals were held in a

horse barn on her property in Smithville. She'll serve a two-year term and preside over the group's 30th birthday on May 11 at the Casablanca Hotel.

Citing the pressures of a young family, Lisa Mitchell of Smithville declined to stand for a further term as president but will remain on the nine-member executive committee as Past President for a further two years.

Erin Amirault of Beamsville joined the committee for a two-year term as Vice-President, Publicity. Ms. Amirault has appeared in three of PP's plays and has extensive business education and experience.

MaryEllen Maniaci, Treasurer, and David Cuthill, Member-at- Large, both agreed to serve a further two-year term. Both are from Grimsby.

The following executive committee members whose terms do not expire until the summer of 2012 will continue to serve.

They are Michael Maguire of Smithville, VP Production; Sandra Bacon and Peggy Robertson, both of Grimsby, Members-at-Large; and Kerry Vandermolten, also of Grimsby, Secretary.

Because she has now moved to St. Catharines, former president Catherine Warrener declined to serve again on the executive committee but remains an interested and valuable friend of the theatre company to which she has contributed in many ways over more than two decades (see separate story).



New VP, Publicity

New to our 9-person executive committee but not to PP itself, Vice President, Publicity, Erin Amirault, was elected in summer

2011 and is clearly representative of our members under 30.

Originally from the East Coast, Erin has been acting since kindergarten, won awards for outstanding actress in a drama at the Newfoundland Provincial High School Theatre Festival in 2000 and outstanding lead actress at St. Mary's University Drama Society in 2004.

Since moving to Beamsville with husband Adam, she has appeared in three Peninsula Players productions: *The Perils of Persephone*, *Who's in Bed with the Butler*, and *An Act of the Imagination*.

Erin works in finance and is currently completing her MBA degree.



Left to right: Cassie Payne, Sandra Bacon, Brandon Maniaci, Brian Munroe, Peggy Robertson, Richard Wouthuis, Shari Vandermolen, Michael Maguire, Kirk Mitchell, Mark Tomlinson, Kerry Vandermolen, Ruth Nigro; Front: Shirley Marshall, director; Bonnie Wallace (Photograph by Steve Adamcryck)

Director's Notes

by Shirley Marshall

Hard to believe after all that hard work that another show is over. *The Affections of May* turned out to be all that I had hoped for and more! I couldn't have asked for a more dedicated cast or a more supportive crew.

A big thanks to Shari, who became the woman whom all the men wished they could have... to Richard, who became the man whom all the women loved to hate (it's OK Richard, we all know you were just acting)... to Brian, my newest theatre friend, who showed us what a little faith in your fellow man can accomplish... and to Kirk, my favorite mugger, who mastered his choreography and captured our hearts.

Thanks as well to the behind-the-scenes people. You all made the show a fabulously seamless production from start to finish, from the set to the music, from the lights to the costumes and the props. Special thanks to Bonnie and friends, who managed to accomplish my demand of the Bo Peep

costume change in less than 2:55 (no thanks to Brooks and Dunn). And to Michael, my hero, once again... what would we do without you?

As my first attempt at directing a play for an adult audience, this was a fantastic experience from beginning to end (and really, who needs 25 people at auditions when the perfect cast is already right there?). I don't mind admitting that I'm hooked. See you again soon!



Shari / May and Kirk / Hank after the dance (Photograph by Steve Adamcryck)

Prez Sez

by Debbie Sirianni, PP President

I'm honoured to be back in the President's chair after many years of serving the Peninsula Players executive in other roles.

I have been with this grass-roots theatre company since the very start, 30 years ago in Smithville. It's a credit to hundreds of volunteers and thousands of playgoers that we have grown steadily year after year. We're very proud of this accomplishment. Thanks to all of you.

My thanks, particularly, go to Catherine Warrenner, responsible through several terms as president, for growing PP through her years of service and dedication.

To close out our 30th season, this spring I will be directing *Arsenic and Old Lace* by Joseph Kesselring, a play I first directed for Peninsula Players 20 years ago. This will be the second time we have resurrected one of our successes from the past. It's a truly hilarious comedy.

Because of the large cast needed, we're holding auditions earlier than usual, on **Wednesday December 7** and **Thursday December 8 at 7:30 p.m.** in Memory Hall at Trinity Unity Church, 100 Main Street West in Grimsby. Be there if you'd like to be a part of a classic show and PP's own history. Show dates are March 23, 24, 25, 30, and 31, and April 1, 2011.

Our season opener in November was *The Affections of May*, a warm and sentimental Norm Foster comedy directed by an old friend of PP, the competent Shirley Marshall, in her first show with adult actors. We joined the Western Ontario Drama League this year, and Shirley deservedly earned the WODL adjudicator's kudos for her sensitive leadership. The adjudication of our show was a positive tool for actors and directors alike.

During this fall show, we discovered our sound and lighting equipment needs to be replaced. Ah well, nothing lasts without frequent reinvestment. For the first time, some of you noticed we were also testing out a new mic system to help audiences hear better. It too could be a major expense but necessary upgrade to provide good theatre, just part of doing business.

The next event to close out our thirtieth year is the 30th Anniversary Party now being planned for May 11, 2012 at the Casablanca Winery Inn. Keep that date open and join us for fun times and a walk down memory lane. Among the events will be a silent auction. Want to donate something? Contact us (debsirianni@hotmail.com), and we'll make arrangements to pick it up.

Finally, though PP has booked directors for the next 18 months, we'd always like to expand our list. If you are interested in directing, we'd like to meet you. Contact our play selection group via the e-mail address above. Think of the possibilities.

Mike's Musings

by Michael S. Maguire, VP, Production



The Affections of May is a play about a woman's triumph over having been abandoned by her husband in a small community, without the resources to continue her failing bed and breakfast business.

So it's fitting that strong, creative women were front and centre in shaping our production of this fine Norm Foster play in November.

Our director, Shirley Marshall, was exemplary in launching her first play with adult actors. She created a forceful vision of May Henning as a woman struggling to

survive financial disaster and the schemes of her two suitors.

Lead actor Shari Vandermolten of Grimsby was the woman we came to know as May. The backstage crew won't forget her wonderful contribution over 12 weeks of rehearsal. Of course, the three excellent male actors in the cast were vital also: Richard Wouthuis, Brian Munroe, and Kirk Mitchell. Script assistant was Maureen Conley.

Let's also commend the superb set created by the multi-talented Sandra Bacon, as comfortable with a drill or hammer in her hand as she is designing the set, arranging the furnishings, or choosing the colour scheme. Thanks too to Bonnie Wallace for her genius with costumes and changes, her work on the set, and her contribution as stage crew.

Front-of-House manager, Peggy Robertson kept superb order, backed up by a bevy of ticket takers and greeters, among them, Erin Amirault, Jennifer Connors, David Cuthill, Cheryl Dell, Linda Doty, Annette Grossi, Diane Labelle, Kim Lymburner, MaryEllen Maniaci, Leah Maragoudakis, Paul Marshall, Lisa Mitchell, Leona Murray, and Leah Padfield,.

Our opening night Gala Wine and Cheese is, of course, very much MaryEllen Maniaci's accomplishment. She buys the food, creates the canapés, orders the wine, and greets the customers by name, ably assisted as always by Lisa Mitchell. Audrey Felker and Joe Shipticki looked after the bar. Catherine Warrener arranged our opening night entertainers, the A-Cappella-Fellas.

Backstage, Kerry Vandermolten was our stage manager, ably supported by a wonderful production staff. Of note were our new lighting techie, Cassie Payne, Lisa Cook, invaluable everywhere backstage, Debbie "Mascara" Sirianni, applying make-

up in the green room, and the always-handly Ruth Nigro.

Brandon Maniaci and his buddies Zach Wenzell and Tyler Coon looked after the sound system, Mark Tomlinson was assistant stage manager, and Steve Adamcryck took many excellent photographs of the director and cast.

Producing *The Affections of May* was great fun for me. Many thanks to all who made it run so smoothly. I've tried to remember everyone, but please don't be offended if I missed you. Blame the editor.

Catherine retires



After more than two decades of involvement with Peninsula Players, former president Catherine Warrener this summer declined to stand for re-election to the theatre company's executive committee. She recently moved to St. Catharines.

Catherine served three separate multi-year terms as president of PP, followed by terms as past president. She also indulged her passion for directing by shaping seven of our recent productions, including *Separate Beds* this past spring.

When she wasn't on stage or in the director's chair, Catherine often designed the sound and lighting of our shows.

Catherine's community involvement has been extensive. She sat on the advisory board of the Grimsby Art Gallery for 10 years, acted as chair of the *Steeped in Music* concert series and served as past president of the St. Catharines Business Club. Her leadership will always be valued.

Become a Member/Patron/Sponsor of Peninsula Players

\$10 – Annual Membership

Entitles you to a half-price ticket per show, our newsletter and notices, and a vote at the AGM.

\$50 - \$250 Annual Patronage

Entitles you to two free tickets per show, and/or a tax receipt, preferred seating and honourable mention in our program

\$250 + Annual Sponsorship

Entitles you to two free tickets per show, and/or a tax receipt, preferred seating and your Company Logo on the face of our program and in all media advertising

Name: _____

E-mail address: _____ Phone _____

Contact any of the 9-member PP Executive at PP Community Theatre Company, PO Box 94, Grimsby, ON L3M 4G1, (905) 309-6358:

Debbie Sirianni, President; Lisa Mitchell, Past President; Michael Maguire, VP Production; MaryEllen Maniaci, Treasurer; Kerry Vandermolen, Secretary; Erin Amirault, VP Publicity; Sandra Bacon, Executive Member/Memberships; David Cuthill, Executive Member/Gala; and Peggy Robertson, Executive Member/Front of House.