

Center Stage

Tallahatchie River Players
New Albany, Mississippi

August 2010 – September 2010

Newsletter Editor: Barbara Wise

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We're off to see the Wizard!

The Tallahatchie River Players will stage a children's production of The Wizard of Oz on August 13 and 14 at 7:00 p.m. at the New Albany High School Auditorium. Tickets go on sale July 26th and are \$10 reserved seating. To purchase tickets, call the New Albany Main Street Association at 534-3438 or go by their office at 135 East Bankhead Street in downtown New Albany.

Director Renee Reid has been working with over a hundred young performers and their parents. From TRP to you, Renee, Great Job! We nominate you for Sainthood!

Check out all the details and an article in the Daily Journal at www.nems360.com, A Trip to Oz.



State of the Stage

A word from our Chairman, Brantley Bryant will be in the next Special Edition of the TRP Newsletter.

Be sure to watch your inbox. Coming in two weeks!

Monster Monologues and Halloween Party!

The Monster Monologues' auditions were a great success. You can check out the cast list on our website at www.tallahatchieriverplayers.com and more information will be sent soon in a special 'Monster' edition of the newsletter! Due to some conflicts with the cast's schedules we have decided to do a Saturday Matinee instead of a night show, the time to be announced later. Show dates are October 28 & 29 at 7pm and 30th at TBA.

However, thanks to these conflicts we are excited to announce a first ever **TRP Halloween party and Costume Contest!!** More details and times will be released later.

We are still short some crew members. Anyone interested in helping backstage (you get to dress-up/makeup and a special on stage appearance) let me know. We also need help with refreshments.

Email me at bwise@csa1.com if you can help.

The Actor's Scene

By Carol Hovland

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The Young Actor: A Creative Beginning

With the production of The Wizard of Oz coming at TRP, I just couldn't believe how it brought back my own memories of my early childhood. I think I was about five or six years old. I remember the little dramatic play shows my neighborhood friends and I would put on together and my mother would be supportive of each and every show we put on. She even helped us by creating costumes and serving our audience members popcorn and sodas! What great memories of how my creative side all began to flourish - Thanks Mom!

Did you know that a young aspiring theatre actor can already have the foundation for his or her craft long before they step foot in a community theatre environment? Believe it or not they do. Observe a two year old child at play and you'll know what I mean. Before I became an actress, I worked as a teacher of early childhood education. During those eight to ten years of teaching, there were so many great challenges and experiences in that profession that opened my eyes. A child's development includes having good creative, social, physical and emotional development as well as good cognitive skills. One of my favorite areas to observe in my preschool classroom was the "dramatic play" area. This creative development area allowed the children's creativity to develop through play using props and costumes made available to them each day. Interestingly, I noticed it was one of the most popular learning areas of the students in my classroom! Young children begin as early as two to five years old to develop their creativity through play and interaction with others. As a parent, there are ways you can help your child emphasize a creative beginning. Having good cognitive skills is important but a creative side to a child enhances their overall well-being.

A creative beginning will be a great confidence builder, allows your child to gain new friendships in interacting with other children in the creative process, and teach independence and so much more. As a child ages and grows they begin to show interests in things they like and dislike such as sports, art, music, reading, writing, etc. Supporting the creative side of your child will certainly make a positive difference in your child's life.

Statistics show that children who are involved in the creative arts whether it is performing arts such as music, dance, theatre, singing or visual arts such as painting or drawing, they tend to do much better academically than children who aren't involved in it. Support of family and friends in a child's choices of interests is the first step in the creative growth of a child. Whether or not your child's future includes becoming a young actor or actress will depend on them.

Each child is different. One child may choose to be an athlete or one child may choose to an interest in the arts. For a young beginning actor or actress the road can be a fun and unforgettable experience. Parents can tell if a child might be interested in acting through the introduction of activities like church plays, community theatre, taking acting classes for youth and maybe the child's school might put on a play or two that your child might want to be a part of. Don't be afraid to get down on the floor and try a little "dramatic play" with your young children at home parents, you never know you just might have a brilliant future young actor on your hands! Just have fun and get involved! That young budding actor or actresses creative future will all ready have a jump-start thanks to you! Did you know that at age six Shirley Temple was the youngest person to ever be presented with an Oscar? As I closed in writing this article, I remembered one of my favorite quotes about the creative process.

"In the creative process there is the father, the author of the play; the mother, the actor pregnant with the part: and the child, the role to be born."

- Stanislavski

My continued thanks to The Tallahatchie River Players for allowing me to be a part of this great newsletter! Until next time, keep on acting and to all actors both young and old - "Stay Creative!"

Theatre Humor

Just remember: It's only theatre until it offends someone ... then it's ART !

Theatrical Terms

Eternity - The time that passes between a dropped cue and the next line.

Prop - 1. A hand-carried object small enough to be lost by an actor shortly before it's needed on stage. 2. Anything that gets in the way of a scene change.

Director - The individual who suffers from the delusion that he or she is responsible for every moment of brilliance cited by the critic in the local review.

Blocking - The art of moving actors on the stage in such a manner as to not collide with the walls, furniture, orchestra pit or each other. Similar to playing chess, except the pawns want to argue.

Quality Theater - Any show with which you were directly involved.

Turkey - Every show with which you were not directly involved.

Final Dress Rehearsal - Rehearsal that becomes a whole new ball game as actors attempt to maneuver among the 49 objects that the set designer added at 7:30 that evening.

Tech Week - The last week of rehearsal when everything that was supposed to be done weeks before finally comes together at the last minute; reaches its grand climax on final dress rehearsal night when costumes rip, a dimmer pack catches fire and the director has a nervous breakdown.

Set - An obstacle course which, throughout the rehearsal period, defies the laws of physics by growing smaller week by week while continuing to occupy the same amount of space.

Monologue - That shining moment when all eyes are focused on a single actor who is desperately aware that if he forgets a line, no one can save him.

Bit Part - An opportunity for the actor with the smallest role to count everybody else's lines and mention repeatedly that he or she has the smallest part in the show.

Dark Spot - The stage area which the lighting designer has inexplicably forgotten to light, and which has a magnetic attraction for the first-time actor. A dark spot is never evident before opening night.

Hands - Appendages at the end of the arms used for manipulating one's environment, except on a stage, where they grow six times their normal size and either dangle uselessly, fidget nervously, or try to hide in your pockets.

Stage Manager - Individual responsible for overseeing the crew, supervising the set changes, baby-sitting the actors and putting the director in a hammerlock to keep him from killing the actor who just decided to turn his walk-on part into a major role by doing magic tricks while he serves the tea.

Lighting Director - Individual who, from the only vantage point offering a full view of the stage, gives the stage manager a heart attack by announcing a play-by-play of everything that's going wrong. One who whines, throws fits, and says, "This is the last show I'm doing here!" I swear to God!

Makeup Kit - among experienced community theater actors, a battered tackle box loaded with at least 10 shades of greasepaint in various stages of desiccation, tubes of lipstick and blush, assorted pencils, bobby pins, braids of crepe hair, liquid latex, old programs, jewelry, break-a-leg greeting cards from past shows, brushes and a handful of half-melted cough drops.

Stage Crew - Group of individuals who spend their evenings coping with 50-minute stretches of total boredom interspersed with 30-second bursts of mindless panic.

Strike - The time immediately following the last performance that all cast and crew members are required to watch the two people who own Makita screw drivers dismantle the set.

Actors - People who stand between the audience and the set designer's art, blocking the view. That's also the origin of the word blocking, by the way.

Stage Right, Stage Left - Two simple directions actors pretend not to understand in order to drive directors crazy. (No, no, your OTHER right!)

Saga of the Road Not Taken

By Paulina Dennis

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." --Robert Frost

When I watched the video featuring Susan Boyle's triumph in "Britain Has Talent," April 2009, I had to admire the sheer moxie of the woman. When Simon Cowell asked her, "How old are you, dear?" she came right back with "forty-seven, and that's just one side of me!" Cowell made his usual face, which said, "Oh, dear, what have we gotten ourselves into this time?" and the audience, mostly young people, started tittering. Understandable: I myself had found Cowell's American Idol an insipid show, with the largest parade of no-talent, no-voice singers anywhere. One exception was a young woman, Fantasia, who had the voice but, I suspect, did not have the backup help that Susan finally got, thanks to Perez Hilton. Dressed in a yellow-gold brocade dress, with yellow-gold heels; she was what we call in New York "zaftig" (Yiddish, meaning "pleasingly plump"). She had thick eyebrows a la Khrushchev, and a tousled hair style that was probably running to ruin because of the hot lights. But once at center stage, she stood on her dignity and she was ready to deliver.

When Simon asked why she waited so long, she smiled and said, "I didn't get the chance before. I felt I might have one here." Susan, unemployed, had been home for years caring for her invalid mother, (which came out later); and she had tried to push for a career, making demos and appearing everywhere she could to sing. Still, Simon's brow went up, when he asked her, "And what are you going to sing for us?" She replied calmly, "I Dreamed a Dream, from Les Miserables." This song comes the closest in the show to being a real operatic aria, and it requires an operatic vocal approach. The story is one of abandonment by a lover, endured by a poor, young, single mother, Fantine. She is the one truly tragic figure in this show, and in many ways, in the novel as well. It's not the monologue that Fantine has in the novel; the words are different, but the tone reflects the same desperation and losing of hope. Because she crossed a boss in the factory where she worked, she was fired and, later, threatened with jail as a would-be prostitute. At that point, Jean Valjean (who owned the factory) stepped in and promised to take care of her daughter, Cosette.

Still, I had to wonder: Why choose this song? It's not really an audition song. Something like "Climb Every Mountain" or "You'll Never Walk Alone" is far better for judging the voice quality and the ability to sustain a lyric line. "I Dreamed..." is frankly a downer. Then it dawned: Susan had identified intensely with this song because it reflected her own lost dreams.

And she started to sing, revealing a real talent, good vocal production, and a lot of upbeat courage. As a result, the entire audience was wowed (including the judges and the backstage crew). When Perez Hilton spoke of how this song and Susan's voice were "a gift to all of us, an honor to hear," the look on Susan's face told the whole story. "At last, someone who can do something has heard me." I know that was what she was thinking. She knew how good she was. What she didn't bank on was the media frenzy, in addition to her unexpected loss of first place in the final contest, which almost brought her down. It was Perez Hilton who stepped in to help her cope with the situation. Her new musical coach trod carefully in helping her expand her dramatic understanding, as was evident in a recent broadcast, featuring singers from the British production of Les Miz. When she came out to sing, she was becomingly dressed in dark sparkling blue with a whole new professional look. This time she realized Fantine's tragic potential in "I Dreamed a Dream," which, to me, proved that she is truly an artist.

Susan, you took a great gamble—you took the road less traveled and it made all the difference. Many of us have gone down the road less traveled, some because of bitter necessity, and others because of new-found unexpected riches at the end of the rainbow. When Susan came to America, people crowded around her, holding up signs expressing their love and how she represented everlasting hope for those who have been disenfranchised by the vagaries of life. It says something else about her, too, that she is now interested in forming a kind of school or organization that will help younger singers in their quest for knowledge, experience, and recognition. Kudos to you, Susan, and may you have all your dreams fulfilled, by helping others attain their dreams.

Mark Your Calendars

Children's Wizard of Oz - August 13 and 14 at 7pm

Tallahatchie Riverfest – September 25 & 25

Monster Monologues – October 28, 29, 30

Sanders Family Christmas Production – December 2 - 4

Little Women Production – Sometime in the Spring of 2011

Fiddler on the Roof Production – Sometime in the Late Spring of 2011

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