

The Summit Playhouse Green Room Notes

Qualified by the New Jersey Cultural Trust

January 2006

Meet the Plantagenets: a family with some “ups and downs”

James Goldman’s comedy, *The Lion in Winter*, opens on February 24 and runs through March 11. In the roles of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine will be Playhouse regulars **Michael King** of New Providence and **Maureen Bentley** of Westfield. Also returning to our stage will be **Megan Guinan**, who was Annie Sullivan in our acclaimed production of *The Miracle Worker*. Megan will be Alais, Henry’s young mistress. Playing the Plantagenets’ conniving sons will be **Matt McCarthy** (Richard the Lionhearted), **Chess Lankford** (Geoffrey), and **Ben Solomon** (John). The role of King Phillip II of France, Alais’s brother, will be taken by **Rick Holloway**. The play has been cast by Director **Joann Lopresti Scanlon** assisted by **Sondra Luckstone**. **Tamara Nedjar** is producing with assistance from **Anita Choubey**.

The Plantagenet family dynamics are complicated but easy to understand once the historical background is presented. It is 1183, and Henry has invited his three sons for Christmas dinner at Chinon and has released for the day his wife Eleanor, whom he imprisoned ten years earlier for conspiring with his sons against him. Each of the sons wants to inherit the throne, and they are jealous of one another. John is Henry’s favorite while Richard is Eleanor’s. Middle child Geoffrey feels left out. Phillip wants his sister Alais to be married to one of Henry’s sons to forge an alliance with England, but she prefers the company of Henry and cannot trust even Eleanor, who helped bring her up. This tale of treachery and infidelity and reversals is kept moving by venomous wit and sparkling repartee, one line of which is Eleanor’s “What family doesn’t have its ups and downs?” Talk about a dysfunctional family!

Robert Preston and Rosemary Harris (Tony, 1966) created the roles of Henry and Eleanor on Broadway, but the actors best known for their portrayals are Peter O’Toole and Katherine Hepburn (Oscar, 1968), who recreated these historical figures in film.

We expect *The Lion in Winter* to be a sellout, so if you want your friends and neighbors to join in the fun, have them call (908) 273-2192 soon to order tickets or go online www.summitplayhouse.org. Prices: \$17 (adults); \$12 (students under 18). Incidentally, some **Summit Lions**, members of the service club that is underwriting the signing and audio-description costs of our March 5th ACCESS matinee, will be coming to see *The Lion in Winter* in winter! We thought you would enjoy this language. After all, the language we hear is what makes the play, and, of course, as Hamlet says, “The play’s the thing....”

The audio-describer at *The Lion in Winter* will be Michael Mooney of the Paper Mill. Carol Goodman from Kean will be the signer.



A Two-Play Subscription for 2006 – A Special Occasion Gift Option

A two-play subscription for *The Lion in Winter* and *The Sisters Rosensweig* (\$30 adults; \$20 students 18 & under) will be available only while tickets for *Lion* last. It makes a great house gift, birthday or anniversary gift! The savings on each subscription is \$4. Call (908) 273-2192 to order a two-play subscription or go online www.summitplayhouse.org.

Our ACCESS Program Needs Everybody’s Help Now!

During the production of *The Miracle Worker*, the Playhouse expanded its commitment to accessibility by providing audio-description, large print programs, assistive-listening, and signing at a special matinee for patrons with visual and hearing impairments. William Gibson’s play about Helen Keller was the perfect vehicle for us to introduce these features. Through the generosity of the Summit Lions Club, the New Jersey Theatre Alliance, an anonymous member of the Playhouse, and several people from Kean University, we will have ACCESS matinees of both *The Lion in Winter* (March 5) and *The Sisters Rosensweig* (May 7).

However, we desperately need the help of all Playhouse members, subscribers, and friends in building an audience base of people who require these features. Although the Theatre Alliance lends us FM headsets, we pay for signing and audio-description; therefore, we wish to serve the greatest number of people requiring ACCESS as possible. **Please notify your relatives, friends, neighbors, and other acquaintances, including doctors and health professionals, about the special services we will offer on March 5 and May 7.** Give them our web site address: www.SummitPlayhouse.org. They will pass on the word to their friends in the blind and deaf communities.

At some time in the future, we would like to have assistive-listening devices (ALDs) available at all performances. (Anyone who has used an ALD at church or in a large Broadway theater knows how helpful it can be.) We will need funds to purchase our own equipment.) We may also want to consider closed captioning on occasion. For now the cost of that would be prohibitive for just a few people. That is why we need your help. Audience development is the job of all Playhouse friends.

>>>>>► **Apply by February 10th to Direct Next Season** ◀◀◀◀◀◀

Anyone interested in directing at the Playhouse next season should contact **President Nancy Boucher** by telephone (973-377-9058), e-mail nboucher@patmedia.net, or letter (% Summit Playhouse, 10 New England Ave., Summit, NJ 07901). Nancy will send you the list of plays that the Board of Governors has selected soon after the publishers have granted us production rights. The 2006-2007 season **will include a musical**.

Call for Videotapes Missing from Our Archives

We wish to digitalize our archival copies of color videotapes before they fade and disintegrate, so we have inventoried our holdings. The earliest tapes in our collection are from the 1990-1991 season. The following twenty are missing: *Murder in Mind* (1990-1991); *To Grandmother's House We Go, Summer and Smoke, & Lend Me a Tenor* (1991-1992); *Fox Fire, I Hate Hamlet, & Death of a Salesman* (1991-1993); *Nonsense & Murder by Misadventure* (1993-1994); *Light Up the Sky, Shadowlands, & Lettice and Lovage* (1994-1995); *Beau Jest, Prelude to a Kiss, & Later Life* (1995-1996); *Remembrance & Gypsy* (1996-1997); *Brighton Beach Memoirs & Enchanted April* (1999-2000); *The Waverly Gallery & An Evening of English Comedy* (2001-2002). If you have archival tapes of the productions mentioned above or you have earlier ones from the Playhouse stage that you wish digitalized to become part of our collection, please call **Nancy Boucher (973-377-9058)**. Our archives are soon to be transferred to the Summit Historical Society.

Tryouts for *The Sisters Rosensweig*

Director Vincent J. Balzano has announced that tryouts for Wendy Wasserstein's *The Sisters Rosensweig* (May 5-20) will take place on February 5 and 7 at 7 p.m. at the Playhouse. The script calls for 4 women and 4 men. The comedy, which takes place in London, concerns Sara Goode, a successful American banker who is celebrating her 54th birthday, her daughter, and her two sisters. When four male friends show up, the situation evolves into "a rather interesting evening, which leads to unexpected romance, suspected partings, recriminations, reconciliations and, above all, newfound love and acceptance." For additional information, go online: www.SummitPlayhouse.org.

Kaleidoscope Theatre for Youth, July 22-30

The Board of Governors has announced that *Once on This Island, Jr.*, based on Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty's musical (1990), will be our summer play for and by children. The original version was nominated for eight Tony awards in 1991, but it did not win any; however, it did garner a coveted Olivier Award in London in 1995. Set in the French Antilles, the musical has been described as "a twist on the traditional 'Little Mermaid' tale" with Caribbean roots. Abbe Moran, the producer, has selected Renee Palermo as director and Judy Brewer as musical director. Auditions will be Sunday, May 21, 2-5 p.m., and Monday, May 22, 6-9 p.m. All roles are open, and performers of all ethnic backgrounds are encouraged to attend.

Playhouse Hosts Arts Workshops

The New Jersey State Council on the Arts and The New Jersey Cultural Trust held grant application workshops on Wednesday, November 30, 2005 at the Playhouse. Twenty people were present at the morning session conducted by the Arts Council, while forty-five were at the Cultural Trust session. Everyone in attendance throughout the day was very complimentary about the Playhouse and how it looks now that phase 2 of our restoration project has been completed.

Save Sunday, April 2, for Benefit for the Playhouse

Summit residents Ed and Betty McColgan will open their Victorian home for a fundraiser to benefit phase 3 of our restoration project: repointing the stone and brick work and replacing the roof on the 1891 building. Watch the mail for your invitation to see this beautiful home, to hear Kean University's "Leading Ladies" (Holly Logue, Kristin Bussiere, Jennifer Vaughn, and Susie Speidel, singing Broadway favorites), and to enjoy delicious refreshments.

Volunteers Needed for Union County Teen Arts Festival, March 16 & 17

For two days middle school and high school students from Union County public, private and parochial schools exhibit their artwork, perform and participate in workshops in all artistic disciplines with professional artists. Volunteers are needed to: (1) Assist artists with workshops; (2) Provide arts stops (short demonstrations or interactive arts activities); (3) General hall duty; (4) "Light" hall duty seated at a table; (5) General coordination help. Volunteers must be college age or older. Lunch is provided. For further information call (908) 558-2550 or e-mail Paula Long at the Union County Division of Cultural & Heritage Affairs plong@ucnj.org.

Defibrillator now Installed in Lobby

Frank Hawrusik has mounted the defibrillator that his wife Cathy raised \$3500 to acquire for the Playhouse. Thanks to both!

The Playhouse Association, Inc., 10 New England Ave., Summit, NJ 07901 (908) 273-2192
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