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Special points of interest:

- NJ State Festival at Rutgers' University March 14th & 15th, 2008

Send ideas for newsletter name to editor: aciccotelli@mail.ocvts.org

Welcome Back to New Vistas

All of us are well aware of the value of networking and gathering not only information that facilitates our getting ahead, but connecting to those people who have similar interests. This past June at the International Thespian Festival in Nebraska, I once again discovered how much information I could still gather to help both me and my students continue to grow. This time it was on a personal level, for I decided it was time to rediscover my acting roots and explore the various other venues available to us drama teachers. Hence my attendance at several TV and film workshops where I not only gathered a plethora of information for actors, but for my students as well who were actively seeking to break into the field. If you've not seriously considered attending ThesFest in NE, you might want to get the information that is already available on the web (www.edta.org).

Simultaneously, I also uncovered new vistas that had just developed and would help us grow even more. Specifically, the Northeast Thespian Festival (www.northeastedta.org) that will take place this year in Waterbury, CT on Dec. 5 & 6. This will be a microcosm of the International Festival since it will adhere to all the International IE rules and qualify our students to perform in



NE come June, 2009. Additionally, there will also be lots of opportunities for our techies and other backstage thespians that have so much to offer. And topping off this delight will be scholarship opportunities that might make the difference to several of our students.

Finally, the best part for those of us here in NJ – the NJ State Thespian Festival which will feature so much of the above, March 14 & 15, and once more at the Mason Gross School at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ. Please visit www.thespians.org for further information. Here's to an amazing 2008-2009; break a leg!

Sandra Van Dyke is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers (SSDC) and the current New Jersey State Chapter Director of the International Thespians. She is delighted to be working with the West Orange H.S. Theatre department for the eighth year (it's magic!). A veteran of twenty plus years of theatre, she has twice been named New Jersey Drama Educator of the Year (a Governor's Award in the Arts.) She and her students were two-time winners with the American H.S. Theatre Festival, performing at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland. Mrs. Van Dyke also holds the distinction of facilitating three high schools' entrance into the Papermill Playhouse Adopt-a-School program for which she offers them and Susie Speidel eternal thanks!



Troupe Directors: Thinking about taking your Thespians to the State Festival?

We Want to Help!

We NJ Thespians want to see more of our state's troupes at the festival! Not sure how to begin the process? Mrs. Valerie Gargus, Festival Director, suggests you begin in late October by getting out a packet to each of your Thespian members with which they can sign up for the various competitions available and which includes the required payments and permission slip. Valerie would be happy to share her packet with anyone. Just email her at vgargus@nburlington.com. Have your students turn in their packets, payment, etc. by Jan. 15, at which time you can determine which students will perform in the various categories. If needed, make your hotel reservations by the end of January. Set up definite rehearsal times. At these rehearsals, get the veteran students to help coach the younger students to free you up for mainstage rehearsal. Get your Thespian officers to help with smaller details. Of course, you are always welcome to ask as many questions as you wish of Valerie Gargus or our Chapter Director, Mrs. Sandi Van Dyke at svandyke@woboe.org. We hope to make the festival a fun, exciting time for not only your students, but for you as well!

-- Valerie Gargus is the drama teacher at Northern Burlington High School.

FairyTale Rehab: the untold stories

By George Dearani

It's always exciting for me to hear from past graduates, especially if they have gone on to study theatre. One of my students from the class of 2003 Bernard Jones, contacted me last semester, about a script he was writing for his graduate project at the University of Alabama.

Bernard was entered in many Thespian categories through his time at Rosa Parks Arts HS, and won Comedy Monologue twice as well as Comedy Pair and Scene, playing a Prince in Rapunzel, Uncut.

He had written a script, and wanted my input. It is called Fairytale Rehab. It deals with Father Goose, as the analyst, to Rapunzel, Little Bo Peep and Lil Red Bone, (A fairytale character that has gone gangsta).

After sharing the script with my classes, we all agreed that we not only thought it was a great short one-act, but we would really love to do it.

Our fall production will take Bernard's script as part of a trilogy of fairytales that are different from the stories we all grew up with. The first tale, ala Wicked, delves into who the real Cinderella really was, and the final tale examines the princesses who would do anything for the heart of their Prince Charming.

This is something vastly different from the intense original drama of last year, America: tragedy & hope!, which dealt with 9/11, Katrina and AIDS. It gives the actors a chance to experiment with off-the-wall characters, voices and mannerisms.

It was presented on Thursday Evening, November 20th at 7pm.

--George Dearani is the drama teacher at Rosa Parks Performing Arts High School

Hellos from the New Student State Board



Alaina Belardo has been a member of I.T.S. since her freshman year. Currently she is the treasurer of her troupe 1530 in West Orange. She is also extremely honored to be able to serve on the State Board through the next school year and is excited about getting to know the other board members better. She knows this will help her improve her own thespian troupe since she will be interacting and learning from thespians from other schools. Most importantly, though, she is excited about contributing her ideas at the meetings to make Festival '09 the best ever!

-- Alana Belardo attends West Orange High School and is on the state board of NJ Thespians 2008-2009.

Becky Brodowski is a member of troupe # 4762 of Northern Burlington. She believes that the state board this year is made up of a fantastic, hardworking group of people who only want the best for the Thespian Society. She will work as hard as she can to make this years Thespian Festival the best one yet! She would like to come up with new ideas to spice up the festival.

-- Becky Brodowski attends Northern Burlington High School and is on the state board of NJ Thespians

Jasmine Gary is a junior who attends Rosa Parks School of Fine and Performing Arts. She is extremely enthusiastic about being a part of the New Jersey State Thespian Board. She believes that she can contribute intelligence, ideas, organization and creativity. She hopes that the thespian festival will be a success.

-- Jasmine Gary attends Rosa Parks School of Fine and Performing Arts and is on the state board of NJ Thespians

JT Kaltreider is a member of troupe # 4762 of Northern Burlington. He hopes to accomplish the best festival ever this year. He has many amazing ideas to spice it up. He will keep our fellow thespians in mind in the planning stages for the best results.

-- JT Kaltreider attends Northern Burlington High School and is on the state board of NJ Thespians

Meeting new people, and accomplishing hard work is something that Cra-Shonda McClaren loves to do. Cra-Shonda is a junior at Rosa Parks High School. She is glad to be a part of the Thespian State Board. She participated in four shows. Things that she would like to accomplish as being a part of the state board is helping others and creating new ideas for the New Jersey Thespian festival. She's very excited to be a part of this.

-- Cra-Shonda McClaren attends Rosa Parks School of Fine and Performing Arts and is on the state board of NJ Thespians

Dayton Pierce is a senior at Bogota High School. This is his fourth year in ITS and will be serving as the troupe's president. As a member of this year's state board, he would like to help design another successful festival. He thinks it is important to incorporate new schools into our festival in order to keep ITS in New Jersey growing.

-- Dayton Pierce attends Bogota High School and is on the state board of NJ Thespians

Stephanie has been a part of I.T.S. since freshman year. She's also been dancing since she was three and acting since middle school. She now attends the Ocean County Performing Arts Academy. She is very excited to be on the I.T.S. State Board! She's really looking forward to planning the state festival because it's going to be an exciting year.

-- Stephanie Porter attends Ocean County Performing Arts Academy and is on the state board of NJ Thespians 2008-2009.

Scott I. Walters is a senior at Lakewood High School and a member of troupe 6118. As a member of the New Jersey State Thespian Board, he hopes this year will be even more successful from prior. He is also hoping that this year's festival will have an increase in participants. With this year's outstanding group of thespians, he believes this can be accomplished.

-- Scott I. Walters attends Lakewood High School and is on the state Board of NJ Thespians



*Tale of Two Cities**Review by Angela Corenblith*

I received an e-mail with an offer for two free tickets to *Tale of Two Cities* from Bob Nation as I am sure many drama teachers did. Regretfully, I was unable to go on any of the offered nights. I e-mailed Bob a thank you. I had remembered meeting him once briefly at Paper Mill. His show was nominated for everything; our show was there for a chorus nomination (probably just good luck!). As he had been the drama teacher of my then chorus director, we had a brief hello and congratulations for him at the end of the evening. I thought I now “knew” him well enough for the personal thank you. What a surprise to get a personal response!

Bob told me he remembered me (!) and how he went from a bored retired drama teacher to working in New York on Broadway in the educational department for *Tale of Two Cities*! He offered me house seats if I wanted them and said that one of his former students was starring in the show. The offer of House seats was a real temptation, but TDF suited my pocket better. So, this past Saturday (Oct. 4), my husband and I went to see the show with our \$32 seats in the rafters.

While I was waiting outside the theatre for my husband, a nice young man was talking highly of the show to a couple. He had on a *Tale of Two Cities* hat and I assumed he worked for the production. As our daughter does lights on Broadway shows that come to Las Vegas, I decided to simply ask, “Do you work on the show?” (So I could take a brief moment to brag about our daughter doing *Jersey Boys* in Vegas.) He answered, “Yes, My wife and I are the producers. I’m Ron Sharpe.” I have to admit that I was a little in awe. He shook my hand and I could only think to answer, “I’m just a drama teacher.” ...and show him my pin from the EdTA conference that I had just attached to my handbag stating, “Theatre for Life... a stage for every age.” He glanced at my tickets, and, as my husband walked up, said, “I don’t like those seats. I think we can do better than that.” We followed him to the Box Office and he exchanged the seats for us adding, “After the show meet me outside the theatre. I am doing a backstage tour. Join us.” With that, he shook our hands and added, “Enjoy the show and tell everyone.”

I had heard that the show had gotten mixed reviews. As Barry and I sat in our seats, now 6th row center orchestra, we began a theatrical evening which answered for me each time I experience it, why I love theatre. I loved the novel. I wondered how they would be able to fit all the details into one evening! They did, both with humor and tears. The voices were amazing, the sets and lights seemingly simple and beautiful (although “simple” is never the case). I was inspired (once more) as an acting teacher at the subtle nuances these professionals bring to their roles, their energy, and their passion. What a beautiful show. The lead, Sydney Carton, that high school Thespian, took my breath away! We were both drawn to his performance: his humor, his despair, his anger, his love, his compassion. As the character you love to hate, James Barbour gave one of the best performances I have ever seen on Broadway.

“No, I wasn’t crying.” As the lights came up after the show, I quickly dabbed my eyes (I am such a softie!) as we headed out to meet Ron for the tour hoping he would not forget this drama teacher he didn’t know. I couldn’t find him (That last trip to the Ladies’ Room!) as the group had already gone backstage. We went to the stage door, were questioned. “Ron said...” and in we were. Now, I have been backstage at both of my

daughter's Vegas shows (*The Producers* and *Jersey Boys*). Those areas were amazingly large with even the Wig Shop on the rear section of the stage. I have been on a tour of Paper Mill at a STANJ workshop. I was even on a Broadway stage during *Cats* (as was the entire audience who wished to be during intermission). Nothing quite prepared me for this.

The stage was not as large as I had thought. This was the same feeling I had during my "I am finally on a Broadway stage!" moment during *Cats*. The details, however, of the lights, the holes in the floor for the smoke, the expense (\$36,000 for the wheels to move, if I heard right, one of the four large stage sections). Then downstairs to the dressing room...small! Simple chairs lined up for the actors next to the hanging racks of costumes, the bins to throw the worn ones in. The cost! (\$20,000 for one dress worn by Lucie Manette, \$850 for a man's period shirt, \$12,000 for a man's long jacket!!!) The work! Down one more level: the lighting and sound area. Thirty miles of cable, one hundred and fifty people to load in the show! Then the small men's dressing room. Finally to the basement to see the original part of the 1920's theatre. Holes cut into the ceiling under the audience were the way they originally "air-conditioned" the theatre. They used to use ice and large fans in the basement to blow cold air through the floor! A small, yet amazing, theatre warm from years of performances and closeness.

As we exited the theatre, I was left with a number of feelings. Although I always knew how expensive a Broadway show was, I never really understood it. Ron and his wife and the other creative partners of this million dollar production are desperately hoping to fill a house for a Period show when the economic tide will surly go against them. These were not moguls, these were theatre people: warm, talented (Ron was Marius and his wife, Cosette in *Les Miserables*), friendly, and real. The "stars" were the same. Natalie Toro who played Therese DeFarge said good bye as she left joking with Ron. Humble and down-to-earth, she dismissed the surveys saying how talented she was. (And, she is talented!) However, I am sure she is eager for her role to be recognized. The author (Book, Music, and Lyrics!), Jill Santoriello was with us on the tour and we didn't even realize it until the end. There was no pretence, only great pride in the production. James Barbour, our Thespian, touched me the most. I saw him backstage and asked if Bob Nation had been his drama teacher (of course, I did congratulate him first on his amazing performance). He did ask how I knew Bob. I shared how he was every drama teacher's wish: to have a student on Broadway and to be so amazingly talented. His answer, "I wasn't always that way. Mr. Nation really pushed me." Wow! From an actor that I think should win a Tony, a gracious nod to his high school drama teacher. That's us guys!

-- Angela Corenblith is the drama teacher at Lakewood High School.



*The adult NJ
Thespian State
Board Members at
the annual retreat
in West Orange,
NJ*

EDTA Conference Report

By Angela Corenblith

This past September I was lucky enough to attend the Educational Theatre Association Conference in Chicago . What an experience! At the airport I seemed to recognize someone from the back: it was Anthony! (Ciccotelli from the Ocean County Performing Arts Vocational School) We talked and then boarded the plane. Another coincidence: my husband and I shared the same row of seats with him! Already I felt off to a great start not letting Anthony sleep but talking (too much, as usual!) about theatre and the conference to come. We arrived at the hotel and, surprise: we were on the same floor! I'm afraid that after that I only saw and spoke to Anthony one more time as I, again, recognized his back, and we talked briefly about this great experience.

I was able to take two PDI's (Professional Development Institutes). One was in Musical Theatre and the other was in Directing. It was amazing how much I picked up that I didn't know but thought I did. I took various workshops on Friday and Saturday: The Holistic Actor, From Impro to Playwriting, MTI Resources, and a great 3 hour Michel Chekov workshop. I was able to see two performances by Second City , both e.t.c. and the Mainstage productions. I only wished I could have taken more workshops.

It was wonderful to be around so many other theatre teachers and to keep learning. What a great way to learn, rejuvenate, and keep the magic alive!

-- Angela Corenblith is the Drama Teacher at Lakewood High School

Coming to Festival:

Key Note Speaker Joe Norton

Since its inception, live theatre has served as a form for presenting social issues; as a result, theatre has always been a catalyst for social change. Keynote Speaker Joe Norton has run his workshop "Theatre as a Social Voice." In this workshop, participants have identified and discussed social themes in plays and musicals. Joe Norton has been an actor, playwright and producer for various companies in New York city, and is presently the Associate Director of Education & Outreach for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, the charity voice of the American Theatre Industry. He will be the Festival's Key Note Speaker and we are really excited and happy to have him at our festival.

NJ Thespians

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SAVE THE DATE
New Jersey
STATE FESTIVAL
MARCH 14TH & 15TH
at
RUTGER'S UNIVERSITY