

Volume 16, Issue 2

November, 2005

Death of a Salesman

Attention must finally be paid to such a person.” With this line a wife pleads for her sons and, ultimately, society to recognize her husband as a significant individual despite his deteriorating health. What is success in the modern world? How do we measure our worth? What does it really mean to be human? Grappling with these universally perplexing and often probing issues of mankind, Tupelo Community Theatre is proud to present Arthur Miller’s classic American drama, *Death of a Salesman*. Dealing with the last days of a failing salesman, Miller utilizes a series of soul-searching past life revelations to figure out the definition of true happiness. In this play Miller defines the tragic hero, earning the playwright both the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award.

The cast is a mixture of TCT’s much-loved veterans and amazing newcomers under the direction of Allana Austin. She is ably assisted by Suzanne Oakley with Geoff Carter as Production Manager. The

Loman family includes Bud Nelson as Willy, Shelly Futrelle as Linda, Judd Wilson as Biff, Jonathan Martin as Happy, and Otis Tims as Uncle Ben. Tom Booth and Kenneth Griswold play next-door neighbors Charlie and Bernard, respectively. Willy’s past and present acquaintances consist of Liz Dawson as The Woman, Jason Pannell as Howard, Beverly Murphree as Jenny, Bo White as Stanley, Brooke Wofford as Miss Forsythe, and Lisa Ganaway as Letta.

Mark your calendars now to attend *Death of a Salesman* **November 17, 18 and 19, 2005** at 7:30 each evening. There is an afternoon matinee performance at 2:00 on November 19. Student groups are also encouraged to attend, but please be aware that there are **adult situations and language** contained in this classic, award-winning drama. For more information and a study guide for students, visit our website at www.tct.ms. For tickets, call 662-844-1935. Don’t miss this award winning drama!



**November 17, 18 & 19
at 7:30 p.m.
November 19 at 2:00 p.m.**

This production of *Death of a Salesman*
is sponsored by





Notes from the President

The curtain is up on another great season at TCT! Our 36th season opener, *Always, Patsy Cline*, performed to sell out audiences. The Party With Patsy (our Outback Fundraiser) was a smashing success. We invited the Hurricane Katrina Evacuees and the Red Cross volunteers to attend the Tuesday night dress rehearsal of the show. After each regularly scheduled performance, a collection was taken to benefit the Hurricane Relief efforts. I am proud to report that we collected over \$3,000 for this effort. One fourth of that went to Embrace Mississippi Children and the remainder went to the Create Foundation's matching funds account for Hurricane Katrina

evacuees in Northeast Mississippi. Our patrons truly listened when Louise (Suzanne Oakley) told them not to be cheap! They generously responded to the cause. Thank you all so much for being so caring!

Our school show, *Crow and Weasel*, was presented to over 1,000 school children. This show is always many children's introduction to live theatre. Thanks to director Sherrie Black and her outstanding cast for helping us bring this production to so many students.

Our second show of the regular season, *Death of A Salesman*, is currently in production. Mark your calendars for this show to be presented November 17, 18

& 19. You will not want to miss this Arthur Miller classic!

Construction will soon be starting to update our out-dated fly loft system and to rework our heating and air system. The fly loft renovation was needed not only to enhance our productions, but also for safety reasons. With the reworking of our heating and air system, the theatre should be more comfortable for our patrons. Thanks to the Mississippi Arts Commission for providing almost \$200,000 for this project.

This will be our last newsletter of the year. Happy Holidays to all of you! We hope to see you soon at another TCT production!

—Tommy Green, President



Renovations Begin at the Lyric

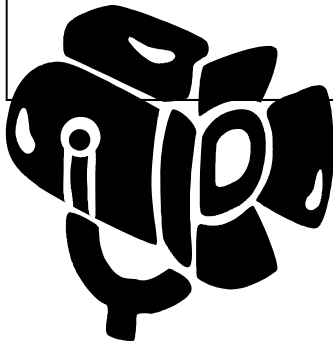
Thanks to another record setting season ticket sales year and with the help of the Mississippi Arts Commission, major renovations to the Lyric's HVAC system and fly loft have begun. Using approximately \$196,000 of Building Funds for the Arts grant money from MAC, The McCarty Company will oversee these projects over the next few months. The current fly loft is almost completely the same as it was when the building was built in 1912. Currently, TCT volunteers are needed to manually fly in and out backdrops and set pieces. The new counterweighted system will allow anyone to handle these operations with ease and will be much safer for all. It will also provide the opportunity for productions to be much more state of the art in their design and functionality.

In conjunction with this work, some changes were needed on the HVAC units to make the fly loft work possible and monies have been dedicated to this work. These improvements

will hopefully provide all our patrons, in the orchestra or balcony seating, equal comfort. As always, we remind our patrons that if you are hot or cold natured to please wear layers for your comfort. As you come in contact with our local representatives and senators, please take the time to thank them for the money provided in this grant from the Mississippi Arts Commission. And TCT says thanks to MAC!



A study guide for students (or adults wishing to learn more) about *Death of a Salesman* is available on our website www.tct.ms or by calling the TCT office.



Spotlight on our patrons

This edition of "Spotlight on Our Patrons" features three generations of TCT patrons. When the curtain goes up next week on the Tupelo Community Theatre production of

Death of a Salesman rest

assured Jo Nell Loucks will be in the audience along with her own longtime supporting cast of friends – and two more generations of her family.

Mrs. Loucks' granddaughter, Tammy Pigg, has been a TCT season ticket holder with her grandmother for several years. Now, Mrs. Loucks' daughter and son – Coleen Roberts and Hal Edge – have become season ticket holders as well.

Mrs. Loucks, 83, said she couldn't remember how long she'd been attending TCT shows, "but it was before they moved downtown in the Lyric."

"Back then everybody dressed up," she said. "Men wore suits and ties, and women wore their best dresses and hose. Now, it's much more casual, and it's just as much fun."

While Mrs. Loucks and her granddaughter have been going to plays together for a number of years, she said it's only recently that her daughter and son caught the fever and became TCT season-ticket holders – compliments of their mom.

"My son moved back from Virginia a few years ago, and I took him and his wife to see a show and they couldn't believe how good it was," Mrs. Loucks said. "That's the way it is with a lot of people – they don't know how really good the shows are."



Board member Catherine Mize (L) with Joe Keating

"There's a lot of talent in this area, and you can always count on the shows being good, clean entertainment – the kind of shows you don't mind taking your friends to see."

Mrs. Loucks said she and several of her friends changed their season tickets this year to the Saturday afternoon performances.

"We're getting older, now, and this is just much easier on us," she said. "That's what I like about TCT: You can tell they're concerned about their customers, both in the quality of shows they put on and in the way they treat us. They're really nice folks. And talented."

We always need volunteers at TCT in all areas. From distributing posters to ushering to helping backstage or in the office—there's always something to do. If you're interested, call our office at 662-844-1935 to find out how you can help!

TCT PERSONNEL

TCT

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Now!

TCT Alumni Are Making Their Mark

Success has no boundaries or limitations except those we give it. TCT has always encouraged our actors to reach for the stars. The walls of TCT hold the signatures of some of the greatest and brightest talents ever seen. To our delight, many who have graced our stage have now gone on to show the world that the stars shine BRIGHTEST in Northeast Mississippi. We are thrilled to say "we knew them when" about many of our stars.

One such star is William Waldrop. This Pontotoc native graduated from Pontotoc High School and earned a Bachelor's Degree in Music from the University of Mississippi. He then attended the Peabody Conservatory of Music at John Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD where he earned his Master of Music Degree in May of 2005. Waldrop excelled there as he directed numerous plays and musicals in schools and theaters. His credits include serving as musical director for *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *Nunsense*, *Into the Woods* and *Godspell*.

William then journeyed to New York City. His very first audition landed him the lead keyboard position for the national tour of *Cats*. This fantastic opportunity is one of a lifetime and is set to tour through June 2006. The show will come to the Ford Center at Ole Miss but it has, of course, been SOLD OUT!

William said that his time at TCT confirmed his love and desire for the musical direction and artistic side of the industry. He said that TCT planted the seed in him for performance theater and that he saw his first musical, *My Fair Lady*, at TCT and he has had a love for theater since that time.

Another phenomenal star of TCT is Lee Pitts. Hailing from Pontotoc, Lee now resides in Los Angeles, CA and he is burning bright like the sun in his pursuit of a fabulous career in television, film and commercials.

Lee attended LSU and then moved to New York where he performed in various theaters and Off Broadway. He landed roles in the show *Sugar* at the Broad-Hollow Theater Company and in the off-Broadway *The Donkey Show*.

Pitts later blazed across the country to L.A. He has

had many commercial spots but that has been only the tip of the iceberg. Lee has landed a recurring role on *General Hospital* and has been in an episode of *Desperate Housewives*. In the film arena, Lee had roles in Disney's *Sky High* and in *House of the Dead II: Dead Aim*, as well as roles in *Rumor Has It* and *Elizabeth-town*.

Pitts says he is so appreciative of the support from his TCT and Northeast Mississippi family. He says he looks forward to the opportunity to return to TCT and perform on our stage once again.

Another bright star of our TCT alumni making a big splash is Allie Grant, the 12 year old daughter of Bob and Angie Grant. The Grant family now makes it home in North Hollywood, CA for most of the year, returning to Tupelo for holidays and summers. Allie has had great success, including appearances on numerous TV shows such as Disney's *That's So Raven* and *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody* and is currently a regular on Showtime's first season of *Weeds*, which airs Mondays at 9 p.m. central time and is replayed several times each week. This new series is a comedy about a mother who makes ends meet by selling marijuana in suburban Los Angeles after her husband dies suddenly. Allie plays Isabelle Hades on the show and, like many actors, is waiting to hear from the network if the show will be picked up for a second year.

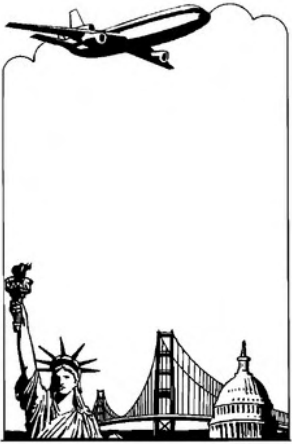
Allie has made many new friends in California, mostly through her dance and piano classes and loves what she is doing. Allie is so well grounded that she participated in TCT's Theatre Camp in July 2005 and told her Mom that it was always one of her favorite things to do.

We're very proud of Allie, Lee and William and hope that Tupelo Community Theatre may have had some positive influence in these actors' lives. Great things continue to happen for TCT as we strive to encourage our actors to excel locally as well as throughout the world. As they say in the media, stay tuned for upcoming stars hailing from the stage of Tupelo Community Theatre!

Thanks!

Kay's Creations recently donated more than 100 tuxedos to our costume closet. This is truly a boon to our costuming capabilities, especially when we do shows like *42nd Street*, which calls for formal wear. Kay's Creations has always been a generous donor to TCT and we truly appreciate this latest generosity.

GO TO NYC WITH TCT



Make plans now to travel with TCT this summer to New York City. See the sights! See several Broadway shows! Eat at restaurants you've seen in the movies! The trip TCT sponsored in the summer of 2004 was so well received, we've decided to do it again. We hope to make this an every other year offering for our patrons.

Manhattan Tour & Travel, the company that has arranged all of Tupelo High School Theatre Department's trips to NYC, is again partnering with TCT to offer this specially priced trip. Dates for the trip are set for July 13-16, 2006. Final details for this amazing offer are being hammered out with the travel company, but tentatively we are able to offer four days and three night in the "Big Apple" at the historic (and recently renovated) Warwick Hotel. The price includes air fare from Memphis; roundtrip transfers from the airport; hotel accommodations; tickets to two Broadway shows; visits to Greenwich Village, Soho, South Street Seaport, Chinatown, Little Italy and more; a seminar with an actor from one of the Broadway shows we see; one group lunch at a famous eatery; and much, much more.

At least twenty participants must go with us for the trip to "make." With twin occupancy in the hotel room, the price of this once in a lifetime opportunity will be around \$1600 per

person. Don't pass this opportunity up! And wouldn't this make a wonderful Christmas present? Or a memorable graduation present for your favorite grad?

The TCT office should have all the details in the next week or so. A \$250 deposit will be due by November 30. All payments for the balance of the trip's cost will be due in the early spring. Call the TCT office now at 662-844-1935 to reserve your spot!

Hurricane News

Many of you remember during *Always...Patsy Cline* that the cast asked you to help TCT make a difference in the lives of those impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita by donating at least \$1 each as you exited the theatre. As always, the generosity of North Mississippians was abundant and as we counted the money we found not only ones, but fifties and hundreds! When the donations were totaled, over \$3000 was raised. Three fourths of the money was given to the Create Foundation for their matching program for evacuees living in North Mississippi after the disaster. The remaining funds were given to Embrace Mississippi Children, a program to supply educational materials for young people affected by the devastation on the coast. TCT also invited evacuees from the BancorpSouth Center and area hotels to attend the Monday "preview" of *Always...Patsy Cline*. Included in the attendees was a group of national Red Cross workers, one of who was

celebrating his birthday. Everyone seemed to enjoy the break and it was a blessing to the cast and crew to be allowed to help in some small way.

On another front, TCT welcomes Jonathan Martin, a Gautier Mississippi native, who was living in New Orleans before the Katrina floods left him homeless and jobless. Through a connection with a friend he went to law school at Ole Miss, Jonathan is making his home in Tupelo and making his debut on the TCT stage as Hap in *Death of a Salesman*. Although a new comer to TCT, Jonathan attended Millsaps College in Jackson with DOAS director Allana Austin and has participated in college productions before. Join TCT in welcoming Jonathan to Tupelo!



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The Lyric

STREAKIN'! **Auditions**

Auditions for our winter dinner theatre production of the musical comedy *Streakin'!* will be held Sunday, November 20, 2005 at 2:00 p.m. and Monday, November 21, 2005, at 7:00 p.m. The cast consists of three men and three women. At least one of the men and one of the women should be African American. Those auditioning should bring a prepared piece of 1970's style music. An accompanist will be provided.

Streakin'! is a musical revue of 1970's songs, containing many of



your favorites from that decade, including "YMCA," "I Will Survive," "The Joker," and "Muskrat Love." There are also fast paced skits—and even some audience participation! Production dates are January 19-21, 2006. So get out your bellbottom jeans, find your pet rock, put on a smiley face and mark your calendars. You don't want to miss this musical flashback. And be prepared for some surprises!

For more information about auditions or tickets, call the TCT office at 662-844-1935.