

**The Year That Was...
 And Almost Wasn't
 ...or
 What Happened to
*Smoke on the
 Mountain?***

One of our responsibilities as a patron-based non-profit organization is to keep you informed about what is happening at Tupelo Community Theatre and the Lyric. So the following is a little taste of the "opportunities" our staff, board and volunteers have dealt with this past year.

The year began at the Civic Auditorium due to the construction going on at our home, the Lyric Theatre. The construction was to be completed by September 15th, but wasn't. Thanks to each of you for your patience regarding this change, one of the few times a TCT show has not been in the Lyric since we purchased the building in 1984. However, *Greater Tuna* was a wonderful show, despite the change in venue. Thanks to Lynn Nelson and her cast and crew for their work.

Next, *Anne of Green Gables*. Director and crew were set, auditions held and rehearsals began in the First United Methodist Church

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TCT Presents

DOUBT

January 24-26, 2008 at 7:30 p.m.
 January 26, 2008 at 2:00 p.m.



Do you ever have doubt about someone else's actions? Or what you may perceive they have done or thought. It happens often. At home, work, church, and even with friends. This is the premise of *Doubt*, the winner of the 2005 Pulitzer Prize and four Tony Awards. The production takes place in 1964, a time of radical change and turmoil in America. The setting is a Catholic School and involves the relationships between its first African American student, his family, and the staff of the school.

Two veteran TCT actresses play the two leading roles. Allana Austin, THS drama instructor, portrays the young, naive teacher Sister James. Jennifer Cummings, who works with Hancock Fabric corporate offices, takes on the role of the tough principal Sister Aloysius Beauvier. The role of Father Brendan Flynn is played by Josh Mabus. Josh works in production of area commercials and movies and at Weatherall Printing. Rounding out

the cast is TCT newcomer Sally Enos Williams. Sally is the administrative assistant to the City of Tupelo's COO. Working together again as Director and Assistant Director for the show are Tom Booth and Christina Womack. Other members of the production staff are Sherrie Black, Christopher Womack, and Keith Gilbert.

The play will be presented in Hattiesburg for the Mississippi Theatre Association Festival January 11-13 and then again on January 24-26 as a regular season show at the Lyric. After each performance the cast and crew plan to have a "Talk Back" session where the audience may ask questions and discuss the ideas presented during this amazing production.

Season patrons may redeem their Wildcard tickets at anytime and tickets go on sale to the public on January 14th. For more information call the TCT office at 844-1935.



Notes from the President

What a year! Tupelo Community Theatre is blessed to have wonderful and talented leaders, board members, patrons and donors. Without them, 2007 could have been the end of community theatre as we know it! Our travails are reported on in other articles in this issue of the newsletter, so I won't focus on them here. But I would like to simply say that difficult problems were encountered, but because of our wonderful supporters, they were not insurmountable problems.

In the midst of this, the board

has continued its strategic planning process. We are narrowing the focus now to the most urgent issues, as we develop the plan. We have recognized that to continue to make an impact for the arts in Northeast Mississippi and ensure our relevance for the future, we need to begin thinking "outside the Lyric." We don't know exactly what that means yet, but we know the first things we need to do—develop our "brand" that defines community theatre, develop our workforce (which includes increasing the number of talented

volunteers who help us with all aspects of production) and improve board recruitment with a diverse group of leaders.

So, as we move into 2008 we are hopeful—that we won't ever again have the struggles we had last year, that the plans will be implemented and make an impact and that we become *the* model of volunteer community theatre!

-Steve McAilly,
President



The Year That Was...

cont'd from page 1...

Wesley Hall's theatre space (again due to construction delays). Then another dilemma—the director had an unexpected health problem. Thank goodness she is now much better, but what to do? Our production committee asked the Assistant Director to step in to take over as director. The cast and crew were not able to get into our theatre until two weeks before their opening, but once again due to the work of many volunteers the show was terrific. Thanks to Sherrie Black and her cast and crew.

Next, *Smoke on the Mountain Homecoming*.

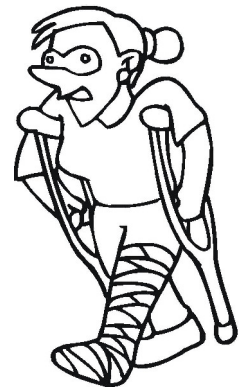
Again, another health problem with this show's director. With the support of three capable board members, auditions were set and held in early December. However, not enough actors auditioned to cast the show. This sometimes happens and due to the holiday season we did not think we could "recruit" the additional musicians, singers and actors needed to make this show the success we know you want it to be. So what to do, again? *Doubt*, the Pulitzer and Tony award winning Broadway play was in rehearsal for the Mississippi Theatre Association festival in

mid-January. The board asked *Doubt* to move to the January 24-26 season slot and *Homecoming* will be scheduled as the opening show for the 2008-2009 season.

Then to add insult to injury, the director for *The Curious Savage* suffered a house fire (not to the ground, but many things were lost and the home must be completely refurbished). We are thankful that she did not lose

everything but the director did not feel she could handle dealing with both a home and a show at the same time. Thankfully, another volunteer director stepped forward and we now have directors for all the remaining shows! Audition dates are now set (see page 4) and we continue to move forward.

Thank you again for your support of TCT and theatre in North Mississippi. And please remember to say a little prayer for our volunteers that they will return to health and stay healthy. And to those about to direct, *break a leg*—but please not literally!



HELP NEEDED WITH SUMMER YOUTH!

The director of SYT's production of *Aladdin, Jr.* is seeking adult and older youth help for her production team. If you are interested, call Amye Goussett at 680-3288 or call the TCT office at 662-844-1935 for more information. Auditions will be held April 20 & 21, with production dates of June 19-21.

Special Thanks to Community Support

At Tupelo Community Theatre we take seriously our commitment to the “community” in our name. Everything we do – from planning to production – is carried out with our community in mind. And the support we in turn receive from the community is tremendous. We’ve already mentioned that the fall and early winter of 2007 were some difficult times for TCT. The sizable cast and crew of *Anne of Green Gables* is extremely grateful to our friends at First United Methodist Church, who offered their stage in their fellowship hall for rehearsals. It allowed them to ultimately produce a delightful show when they got back on the Lyric stage – only days before the opening.

While it seems like most of the time we’re trying to herd cats, there is much more going on than just trying to figure out which show to do next. Indeed, the TCT board of directors has begun long-range planning to ensure that community theatre in Tupelo is around for a long time to come. To that end, Jan Eastman, director of development at CREATE Foundation, has volunteered to lead us through the very lengthy, very thorough and very necessary long-range planning sessions. She’s already facilitated a weekend board retreat and two more planning sessions with the board – and there’s more to come.

With the support of organizations and individuals like First United Methodist Church, CREATE and Jan Eastman there is no question that Tupelo Community Theatre will soon realize its vision of becoming *THE MODEL FOR VOLUNTEER THEATRE*.

We Still Need “U”

Do you know what’s missing at Tupelo Community Theater? U! Have you ever wondered just how TCT comes up with such great shows and puts on a production as great as any you’ve seen? It’s not just the show, it’s the great network of volunteers all working cohesively to produce a theatrical masterpiece.



continue to flourish by offering great productions, experience and camps to everyone.

The greatest resource of TCT is you. What can I offer you ask? We need painters, set crews, ushers, cast members, sound/lighting technicians, builders, artists, musicians and much more. No

There is work for every volunteer at TCT and there is work for you. Every facet of TCT is built upon volunteers that share a love for the arts and a belief that Northeast Mississippi possesses the talent and support to produce Broadway level shows. Whatever your talent or skill, you can help our theater

matter if you have hours or days to donate, we need you. Whether you desire to participate by donating time, resources or funding, WE NEED YOU.

A world of great experiences awaits you at TCT; join us by contacting the business office at 662-844-1935. U make Tupelo Community Theatre complete!

TCT PERSONNEL

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

TCT
 200 North Broadway
 P.O. Box 1094
 Tupelo, MS 38802

 662-844-1935
 e-mail address:
 1tct@bellsouth.net

 Visit us online at
 tct.ms

Polly Bailey
 Renee Baldwin
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Auditions for Curious Savage

Tupelo Community Theatre will hold auditions for its upcoming production of *The Curious Savage* on Monday, January 14 and Tuesday, January 15 at 7 pm in the rehearsal hall. This comedic play was written by John Patrick, Pulitzer Prize winning author of *The Teahouse of the August Moon*. Five men and six women ranging in age from early twenties to late seventies are needed to tell the humorous story of Ethel P. Savage, a woman whose husband recently died and left her approximately ten million dollars.

Help us bring to life Ethel's three stepchildren, who are shocked to find out that their mother plans to set up a memorial fund with the



money to fund the "ridiculous" dreams of people. Or maybe you could be one of the inmates at the sanatorium where the stepchildren commit Ethel and where she sends them on a wild goose chase to find the cash and a half-million dollars in negotiable bonds. There are also parts for a doctor and a nurse to oversee the whole charade and to help us determine who the crazy ones really are.

Performance dates are Thursday, February 28 through Saturday March 1. Join us for auditions or contact the TCT office at 844-1935 or director, Suzye Sheffield (844-8534), for other ways to be involved in this zany production.