



Volume 18, Issue 4

February 2008

TCT Presents

The Curious Savage



February 28, 29 & March 1, 2008

7:30 p.m.

March 1, 2008

2:00 p.m.

This production sponsored by



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Just what would you do with \$10 million? Can you even come up with a plan to spend that kind of money? And in 1950, \$10 million was worth much more than today's dollars. Well, Mrs. Ethel P. Savage has just that quandary. Her husband has died and she would like nothing more than to establish a memorial to him that would fund the foolish pipe dreams of big dreamers. There's just one problem. Well, three problems really. Her three stepchildren feel the inheritance should be left to them.

Join us for John Patrick's quick-witted dramatic comedy, *The Curious Savage*. Enjoy the hilarity of Patrick's main character, Mrs. Savage, portrayed by Sally Gray, who is committed to a psychiatric institution by her stepchildren. She immediately becomes endeared to the other residents: Jeffrey, played by Russell Fox;

Fairy May, played by Pamela Boutot; Mrs. Paddy, played by Lynn Nelson; Hannibal, played by Mark Morgan; and Florence, played by Pam Crippin.

The staff at The Cloisters are depicted by David Neilsen as Dr. Emmett and Stacy Smith as Miss Willie, his psychiatric nurse. They try to determine who needs to be placed in seclusion - Mrs. Savage or her three stepchildren. Laugh as Senator Titus Savage (played by Danny McKenzie), Lily Bell Savage (played by Lisa Kimes) and Judge Samuel Savage (played by Eddy Taylor) revert to their childhood. The three spoiled elitists scheme to terrify their stepmother into submission, but end up failing miserably as their plans totally backfire. And, if that's not enough, Mrs. Savage has converted the cash into nice half-million dollar negotiable bonds which have disappeared and everyone is

a suspect.

Suzye Sheffield directs this hilarious comedy with abundant assistance from Craig Helmuth. The set will be a visual delight with Marianna Coffey at the helm with set and lighting design and Craig Helmuth leading the properties and set dressing. Merrie Hughes will provide a sound design to get us in the mood for a really fun time. Laura Quene returns to TCT with her wonderful costume design. Rounding out the production staff are David Atkins as stage manager, Carolyn Neilsen as hair design coordinator, and Richmond Smith as lighting assistant.

The Curious Savage is sure to be a fun and enlightening time for all. Production dates are February 28, 29 and March 1 at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday afternoon at 2:00 p.m. Call the TCT office at 662-844-1935 to reserve your seat now. See you at the Lyric!



Notes from the President

Tupelo Community Theatre is coming down the home-stretch for its 2007-2008 season. Thanks to the hard work of many volunteers, the board of directors and our Executive Director Tom Booth, we have been able to bring you and the Tupelo community first-rate theatrical performances, despite several obstacles this year.

The latest obstacle was not being able to produce *Smoke on the Mountain*, *Homecoming* in the January season slot. But what a substitute! TCT had already prepared an entry for the Mississippi Theatre Association festival. We knew we had an all-star production team and all-star cast with *Doubt*. After the competition, the state knew it too. Winning "Best

Production," "Best Actress," "Best Scenic Design," "Overall Technical Excellence," and placing two cast members in the "All Star Cast," TCT was a star. Thanks to the director, Tom Booth, his cast and the technical crew for representing us so well! And thanks to them for letting us move the show into the season ticket slot. They went beyond the call of duty, and "did us proud" by sharing the play with Tupelo. The cast and crew of *Doubt* will travel to Chattanooga to present the show at SETC on March 8. We know they'll do us proud...break a leg!

Coming down the home stretch, as we turn the last curve, Suzye Sheffield is directing *The Curious Savage*, assisted by Craig

Helmuth. They and the cast are working hard to bring you another first-class show. Don't forget February 28, 29 and March 1 for this comedic classic of the American stage.

Then it will be on to the Gum Tree production of *Gypsy* in May. Auditions will be held in March. Look for an announcement soon.

Before you know it, it will be time for the Summer Youth Theatre production of *Aladdin, Jr.*

Tupelo is blessed with talent and many people who share their gifts at Tupelo Community Theatre, the model of community theatre!



-Steve McAlilly,
President

Scholarship Deadlines Near

Tupelo Community Theatre offers three \$500 scholarships each year. The Liveakos Scholarship is offered each year to a graduating Tupelo High School Senior who has demonstrated scholastic achievement and an aptitude for the dramatic arts. This scholarship is in memory of Ruth Liveakos, a charter member of the TCT board and the director of TCT's first production.

The Martha Geddie Memorial Scholarship is awarded each year to a Mississippi student currently enrolled in college with full time status majoring in speech, oral communications, drama, mass media and/or related fields. Our third scholarship was created in memory of B. J. Huddleston, a talented artist and craftsman who dedicated years of work to our theatre. The B. J. Huddleston Memorial Art Scholarship recognizes a graduating Tupelo High School Senior who has demonstrated artistic ability,



academic achievement, leadership and good citizenship.

If you have questions concerning TCT's scholarship programs, you are encouraged to call the Lyric office at 662-844-1935, or e-mail 1tct@bellsouth.net. Please take advantage of these financial opportunities to further an education in the dramatic arts and related fields. The application form can be obtained at the TCT

Business Office or you can print from our web site at www.tct.ms. Applications must be received in the Business Office no later than April 15th. A panel from the TCT Scholarship Committee and Board of Directors will make the final selection. Recipients will be notified by June 1st. Students must complete at least 12 hours each semester (or its equivalent if on the quarter system) and maintain at least a 2.5 GPA.

Headed to SETC!

TCT is extremely proud to announce that *Doubt* won the “Best Production” award at the Mississippi Theatre Association Festival in Hattiesburg in January. Many of you had a chance to see the performances at the Lyric January 24-26 when *Doubt* was substituted into the regular season. Thank you to all those who attended our celebration receptions each night after the show, dropped a donation into the collection container, or just said how proud you were of our recognition again as an “Award Winning Theatre.”

Now the cast and crew are preparing to take *Doubt* on the road to the Southeastern Theatre Conference in Chattanooga. TCT will perform the show on Saturday, March 8th at 10 a.m. at the Chattanooga Theatre Centre and we would love to

DOUBT

**Chattanooga
Theatre Centre**

**March 8, 2008
10:00 a.m.**



see some Mississippi faces in the audience. We are also planning to offer one final free performance to the public before we head to SETC. Watch the *Daily Journal*, check our website at www.tct.ms or just keep your ears open for the time and location of this final opportunity to see this Pulitzer and Tony Award winning production!

The Show Must Go On

We have all heard the adage “the show must go on.” With the recent production of *Doubt*, the adage hit all too close to home.

One moment Jennifer Cummings was preparing to go on the Lyric stage in TCT’s award-winning production of *Doubt*; the next moment she was sitting in the hospital with her critically ill mother. One moment Sherrie Black was working backstage in the production; the next moment she was playing Sister Aloysius, the role in which Cummings, a TCT veteran, had recently won best actress in the Mississippi Theatre Association competition. And the show went on – without a hitch.

On Wednesday before Thursday’s opening night, Cummings told director Tom Booth she had to be with her mother and wouldn’t be able to perform. When Booth called Black to tell her the news, Black, another veteran on the Lyric stage, said simply: “Just tell me what you need me to do.”

She was soon holding a script, covered to look like a prayer book, and working late nights with fellow actors Alana Austin, Sally Enos Williams and Josh Mabus. When the curtain went up Thursday and Friday nights, there was no doubt about *Doubt*. Black’s performance was flawless; the show was a hit with the understanding audience.

When Cummings’ mother’s health dramatically improved, she was able to rejoin the cast for the two Saturday performances – and Black willingly returned to her backstage duties. “Sherrie has my total admiration,” Cummings said. “I told her she was my hero. I was comforted to know that she was the one up there in my place...my family had to come first. I just had to be absolutely sure my mother was out of danger before I could think of doing the show.”

“Comfort” was not exactly what Black was feeling. “I’m glad I was able to help out,” she said, “but it was terribly uncomfortable being

on stage with a script in my hand. I was worried about throwing (the other cast members) off, but they were super to work with and made me look pretty good,” and added “I truly wish everyone who came Thursday and Friday nights could have seen Jennifer play that role. She was fabulous.”

Cummings wasn’t the only cast member in distress. Sally Enos Williams, making her TCT debut, was also coping with a terribly sick mother, who did indeed pass away the following week.

While it is not unusual for cast members to become good friends, Cummings said she believes the bond she and Williams now share is perhaps stronger than usual. “This was Sally’s first show, so getting to know her and going to MTA was one of the best times I have ever had,” she said. “We shared a lot in a short time, the angst of learning lines, laughter, tears, encouragement, hugs, and lots of support.”

Spotlight on Our Patrons



Sometimes just saying “thanks” isn’t enough. Two of our patrons have recently gone above and beyond helping TCT and we want to express our appreciation.

Fred Cannon, owner of Dillard Enterprises, has rented extremely nice warehouse space to TCT at a very reasonable, affordable rate. The warehouse that we had used for many years was severely damaged in Hurricane Rita and was ultimately torn down. The temporary space we used was owned by Journal Publishing. It became unavailable and we had to move quickly. Thanks to Fred for helping make that transition a lot easier.



And speaking of moving, we had to move all of our set pieces, furniture, flats, and platforms to the new space. Many hands make light work and about 15 volunteers showed up last Saturday to help us move. David Neilsen brought his R.L. Estes Office Furniture delivery truck to help. If it hadn’t been for David’s umpteen trips, it would have taken us literally twice as long as it did to move.

TCT depends on patron support, not only for survival, but for growth. It’s patrons like Fred and David that help make TCT the theatre it is today. Thanks!

Volunteers Needed

TCT always needs volunteers! Always! There are many ways to help out.

1. Office help (takes as much or as little time as you have to give)
2. Set construction and painting (no previous experience necessary!)
3. Poster distribution (only takes one afternoon a few times a year)
4. Ushering at productions (only takes an hour once a year)
5. Helping at Krewe events like *Music, Monet, and Margaritas* and



We’ve only listed five ways volunteers can help at TCT, but there are countless other ways too. And it’s fun too!

If you’d be interested in helping out, call Tom Booth at the Lyric office at 662-844-1935 or by e-mail at 1tct@bellsouth.net. If you would be interested in helping with Krewe activities, contact Suzanne Oakley by e-mail at qoakley@hotmail.com.

Volunteer today...you’ll be glad you did!

Seeking Summer Intern

For each of the past four years Tupelo Community Theatre has selected at least one college age student to work as a Theatre Intern during the summer months. The intern will have the opportunity to work and learn about all areas of theatre operation, from administration to tech to education and helping to execute our Summer Youth Theatre production. Although this is an unpaid position, scholarships have historically been awarded to the intern at the end of each summer. A minimum 15-hour-a-week commitment to the theatre is expected from mid-May until the student returns to college in August. Hours can be flexible. Please contact the TCT office at 662-844-1935 for more information.



Tribute to Our Beloved “Ms. L”



Ruth Liveakos and Roger Wicker in *On Golden Pond*, the first production in the Lyric Building

Tupelo Community Theatre lost a beloved friend on February 4, 2008 when Ruth Liveakos passed away at her home after a long illness. TCT quite possibly might not exist today and, at the very least, would not be the quality community theatre that it is without her. One of the founders of Tupelo Community Theatre, and a driving force behind its success in the early years, she directed *Laura*, the very first show that TCT produced. She went on to direct countless other shows, as well as serving faithfully on the board of directors for many years. The first show produced on the Lyric stage after TCT bought the building was *On Golden Pond*, starring Ruth Liveakos as Ethel Thayer.

Mrs. Liveakos was born in Mobile, Alabama in 1915. She received her bachelor’s degree from the University of Montevallo and her master’s degree in English and speech from the University of Alabama. She married Gus Liveakos in 1946 and worked at the

Pentagon during World War II. She lived and taught all over the United States and in Cuba before moving to Tupelo in 1957.

“Ms. L,” as her students affectionately called her, taught math, history, speech, and drama at Tupelo High School from 1959 to 1985. Many students over the years were inspired by her love of theatre and have pursued successful careers in professional theatre. Many others remain active at TCT and other community theatres across the region today because of her influence and inspiration. Countless more students remain passionate today about their love and appreciation of good theatre.

In 1985, Ms. L was given the Cowboy Maloney Award by Mississippi Theatre Association for her significant contributions to community and high school theatre throughout the state. She was named to the Mississippi Thespians Hall of Fame in 1989. A scholarship was set up at TCT in her honor to assist a graduating Tupelo High School student who has demonstrated scholastic achievement and an aptitude for the dramatic arts. The auditorium at the new performing arts center at Tupelo High School was named in her honor.

Also active in other aspects in the community, Ms. L was a dedicated member of All Saints’ Episcopal Church, where she taught Sunday School and sang in the choir for many years. She participated in Meals on Wheels and the Alumni Association for the University of Montevallo, as well as being active in the Altrusa Club.

Although she will be sorely missed, her legacy will live on at TCT for many, many years to come.

TCT PERSONNEL

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Season Sponsor: **BancorpSouth**

This project funded
in part by a grant
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Auditions for Gypsy

What could be a better way to wrap up our successful 2007-2008 season than with *Gypsy*, a sure crowd pleaser? Our May 8-10 Gum Tree production, is a musical fable suggested by the memoirs of Gypsy Rose Lee. She was an actress, burlesque entertainer, and writer whose 1957 memoir included a scathing portrait of her domineering mother.

The story revolves around Mama Rose, the quintessential stage mother, and her two daughters, Baby June, the star, and Louise, the "not-so-talented" daughter. We see the girls as young performers and follow them into adulthood as they are pushed and prodded by their Mama Rose. With music by Jule Styne and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, the show was



a 1959 blockbuster and boasts a score with such classic songs as "Everything's Coming Up Roses," and "Rose's Turn."

Tom Booth will direct this year's production. He is still seeking a musical director for the show. If you are interested in discussing this opportunity or know someone who is (or just have questions about the show), contact Tom at 1tct@bellsouth.net or call 662-844-1935.

Auditions are planned for mid-March. A limited number of children's roles are available and men and women of all ages are needed for this large cast. Watch our web site, www.tct.ms, or check our audition information line at 844-1935 ext. #12 for the exact dates.