

NEWS FROM THE

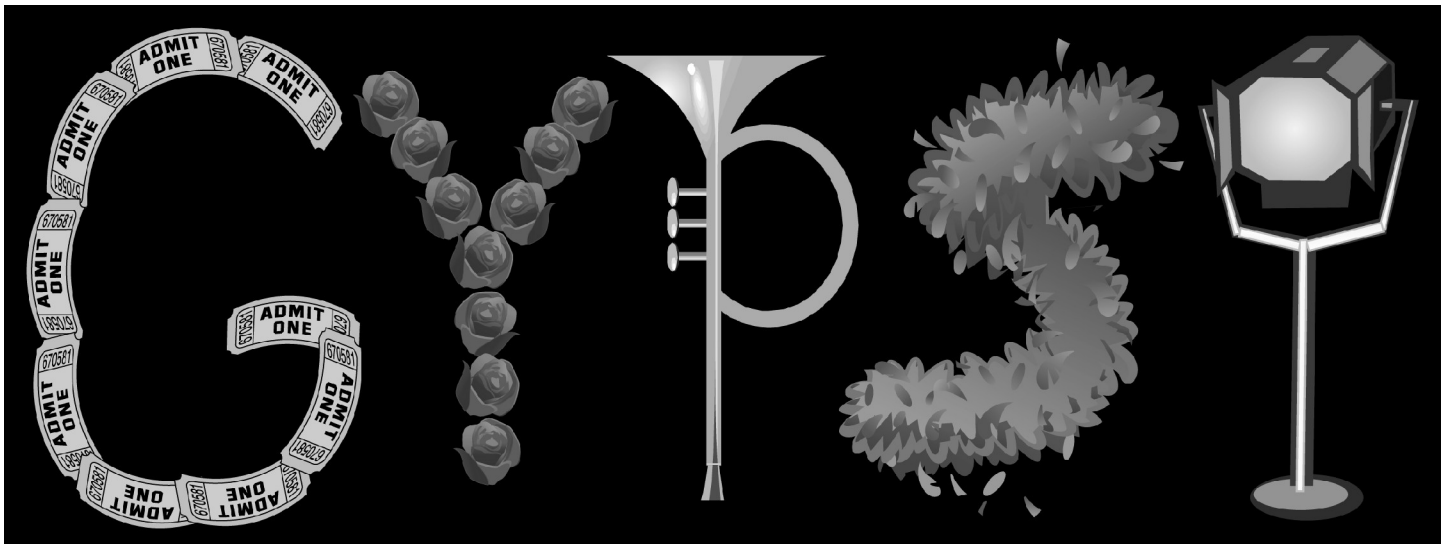
# LYRIC

FOR FRIENDS OF TUPELO COMMUNITY THEATRE

Volume 18, Issue 5

April 2008

## TCT Presents



**May 8-10, 2008**

**7:30 p.m.**

**May 10, 2008**

**2:00 p.m.**



**Sponsored by** NORTH MISSISSIPPI MEDICAL CENTER

**E**thel Merman, Angela Lansbury, Tyne Daly, Bernadette Peters, Patty Lupone, Suzanne Oakley. What do all these actresses have in common? They all have starred as Mama Rose in a Broadway production of *Gypsy*. Only Suzanne will perform on Broadway at the Lyric Theatre in Tupelo for TCT's Gum Tree production of *Gypsy* May 8-10, 2008. And why have so many wonderfully talented actresses wanted to play Mama? The story and the music, of course!

First the story. The book by Arthur Laurents is loosely based on the 1957 memoirs of Gypsy Rose Lee, the famous strip tease artist. *Gypsy* tells the story of Rose Hovick, the ultimate show business mother, and her daughters June and Louise. Mama Rose (Suzanne Oakley) pushes her talented

daughter June (Allison Nichols as a child and Jenny Bradford Curlee as a young woman) to be a "star." Louise (Lauren Lundy as a child and Amye Gousset as the adult) is less gifted and sometimes feels pushed aside by her mother. As the family travels across the country trying to make a living in the last days of vaudeville they meet Herbie (Mickey Gousset) a candy salesman and former agent. Herbie is convinced by Rose to become the group's agent, as well as Mama's love interest. He is also a stabilizing force for the family. The children are growing up and vaudeville is gasping its last breath. June feels held back by Mama and Louise feels ignored. They finally find themselves at the bottom of the show business ladder as they are booked into a burlesque house by mis-

take. There they meet three "dancers" who sing the show stopping number "You Got to Have a Gimmick" Mazeppa (Amanda Summers), Electra (Kelly Bergman), and Tessie Tura (Pam Crippin) dole out advice to Louise. As the story closes Mama is forced to make a decision that will change their lives forever—and the legend of Gypsy Rose Lee is born.

And then the score...how could a production go wrong with lyrics by Stephen Sondheim and music by Jule Styne? The show includes many familiar songs like "Let Me Entertain You," "Some People," and "Everything's Coming Up Roses."

The supporting cast includes Tim Hester as Uncle Jocko; Fred Cannon as Georgie; Mylie Haire as the Balloon

...cont'd on page 2



# Notes from the President

The 2007-2008 season is winding down. We're in the home stretch. Production is underway for the Gum Tree spring musical. Our community has come to look forward to this production each year and this year's play will exceed your expectations! *Gypsy*, directed by Tom Booth, will be the perfect finish to our season ticket package. If you already have your tickets, great! You'll want to buy more and enjoy it with friends. Great cast, great set, great direction, great facility, great show. Just what you expect from TCT!

Behind the scenes work is going on too...work that may not be visible for a while. The playreading committee is working toward bringing you another season of great plays for your

enjoyment. The nominating committee is working strategically on ensuring we have a diverse group of committed board members. The ultimate strength of our organization begins with the board and we are developing a comprehensive board recruitment plan. One of our strategies is to build our volunteer base. The board recruitment plan will help that. But Executive Director Tom Booth is also beginning to develop workshops for people interested in learning backstage aspects of production like lighting, sound, directing, etc. These efforts now will pay dividends in the future.

We were all saddened by the loss of our friend and fellow board member, Jess Mark. TCT is what it is

today because of Jess' leadership for three decades. Jess was committed to making TCT "the model of volunteer theatre" long before the rest of us knew what that was. Jess not only gave leadership, but time and "sweat equity," whether directing plays, acting in plays, building sets, or putting in lights and sound systems. And we will never forget his announcements at the beginning of each play.

We will miss Jess and his shoes won't be filled. *Gypsy* will be a huge success because of the things Jess gave us! His legacy will live on at The Lyric.

**-Steve McAlilly,  
President**



## Gypsy...

...cont'd from page 1

Girl; Anna Ballard, Maggie Davis, Ashton Martin, Olivia Roberts, Summer Price, Allison Patterson, Anna Claire Price as talent show kids; Shelby Jones, Beverly Murphree, Carolyn Neilson, and Jill Williams as their mothers; Barbara Fleishhacker as Mrs. Crachitt; Kenneth Griswold as Yonkers; Rick Griswold as Mr. Kringlelein; Craig Helmuth as Pasty; Tommie Ivy and Stuart Rial as Farm Boys; Brian Martin as Tulsa; James Lundy as Mr. Weber; David Neilson as Pop; Jason Pannell as Cigar; and Katie Pannell, Shayla Reese, Marianna Coffey, Michelle Waits and Jauna Ellis as Hollywood Blondes.

*Gypsy* is directed by Tom Booth, with Tracie Maxey Conwill and Keith Gilbert serving as assistant directors. Music direction is by Linda Kay Price, with choreography by



Allison Griswold. Lighting design is by Bronwyn Teague. Nancie Beard, Tommy Green, Laura Quene, and Christina Womack are coordinating costumes.

Please join the cast and crew of *Gypsy* May 8-10 at 7:30 each evening and at 2:00 p.m. Saturday for a matinee. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for students. **Due to the large demand for tickets for this show, we**

**encourage our season ticket holders to call the TCT office at 844-1935 to release any seats they will not use.** Don't miss this opportunity to see an American Broadway Classic! Enjoy yourself as the cast and crew come together to bring the "Curtains Up" and "Light the Lights" to show you that "You've Got Nothing to Hit but the Heights" at this Tupelo Community Theatre Production!

# Off to See the Wizard at TCT Theatre Camp

Lions and tigers and Elphaba? If your children love the Wizard of Oz then “ease on down the road” to the Lyric Theatre this summer. TCT’s Summer Theatre Camp will be examining scenes, songs, and sights from three of Broadway’s most famous and successful musicals. We will discuss the story of *Wizard of Oz* through the classic MGM musical, *Wicked*, and *The Wiz*. What would happen if the Wicked Witch and Glinda were friends? Was the classic a stage musical or a movie musical first? What is it like to be a Winkie? What if Dorothy were a shy schoolteacher from Harlem?

This summer students will have an opportunity to discover all this and more. TCT is once again offering a summer Theatre Camp for school age children. This year we are **Off To See the Wizard**. Students will be able to explore theatre origins and uses of theatre, art, and music along with hands on activities designed to enrich and entertain. Join us for a look at musical theatre’s many versions of the L. Frank Baum classic, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.



TCT’s Theatre Camp 2008 will be held the week of July 21-25. There will two sessions a day from 8-11:30 am and from 1-4:30 pm. There will be a performance on Friday to showcase the students’ work.

TCT is pleased to have as camp counselors this year  
**Suzanne Oakley**, talented actress and director, for Music; and  
**Marianna Coffey**, art/theatre instructor from Tupelo Middle School, for Art.  
 Returning as camp director and drama instructor is  
**Allana Austin**, actress, director and theater teacher at THS.  
 Cost for the week is \$100.  
 Contact the TCT office at 662-844-1935 for more information.

## TCT Theatre Camp July 21-July 25, 2008

Camper’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

M\_\_\_\_F\_\_\_\_\_ Grade Next Fall \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian Name \_\_\_\_\_

Day Phone \_\_\_\_\_

T-Shirt Size (Please circle one) Youth S(6-8) Youth M(10-12) Youth L(14-16) Adult S M L XL

Health related or other concerns regarding camper:  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Deadline is June 15. Cost is \$100.** Make check payable to TCT and mail to  
 TCT, P. O. Box 1094, Tupelo, MS 38802.  
 For more information call the **TCT office at 662-844-1935**

# Tribute to Jess Mark

By Tom Wicker

Tupelo Community Theatre lost a colleague, an advocate, a patron and a friend when Jess Mark died on March 14th of this year. TCT was a beneficiary of the passion and vision for community theatre that drove Jess from the first time he auditioned for a part in the fall of 1981 until the last play he directed in May of 2007. In the more than twenty-six years that intervened, Jess was on stage or backstage for more than 131 TCT productions – that’s more than half of all of the plays that TCT has produced in its almost forty year history.

He directed such memorable shows as *Sound of Music*, *My Fair Lady*, *Hello Dolly!*, *Anything Goes*, *Big River* and *Beauty and the Beast*. He was Mayor Shinn in *The Music Man*, as well as playing parts in *Moon Over Buffalo*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Ponder Heart*, and *Smoke on the Mountain*. Of course, we can only say with certainty that Jess was involved with “more” than 131 plays because if he had control of the program (which he often did) he sometimes decided not to list himself as part of the construction crew, or as the sound technician, or lighting operator, or scenic designer. Jess appeared on stage in some 25 of TCT’s shows, but was almost always involved in hauling, painting, hammering, promoting, directing or working as a member of the stage crew. He loved the limelight as much as any of us, but it didn’t matter to him whether he was in it or aiming it at someone else. Jess loved an audience in the truest sense of putting the audience first.

Jess first showed up to audition for *How the Other Half Loves* when TCT was operating out of its venue on East Main Street. He tried to enter the building through the front door – which was locked – and he was about to leave, but was chased down by an alert member of the casting committee. We’d hate to think of what we’d have missed if he’d gotten away, because he was a driving force in the purchase and renovation of the Lyric Theatre, the North Annex, the restructuring of the lighting and sound equipment (in several phases), the redesign of the balcony and our most recent capital project which involved renovating



**Jess Mark with co-stars Renee Baldwin and Jennifer Collins in the memorable 2002 production of *Moon Over Buffalo*.**

the fly-loft and overhead of the “Jess Mark Stage” at the Lyric.

For several years Jess, who loved technology, was solely responsible for maintaining our database of patrons, printing the labels for our season ticket brochures, installing and upgrading our digitally controlled sound and lighting systems, our backstage communications capabilities and even the hardware and software we now use to print tickets for our reserved seating. For more than ten years, it was Jess who put together every program and newsletter and arranged for the printing of every poster for every play. He earned the moniker, “Mr. TCT.”

Fortunately, Jess never forgot that first time he tried out – all the doors to the theatre were open for auditions and anyone who wanted to become a part of TCT was welcomed and encouraged by him (although sometimes the encouragement was delivered, shall we say . . . fortissimo). We miss Jess – we’ll always miss him – but he left us with a legacy of excellence that we can only strive to continue.

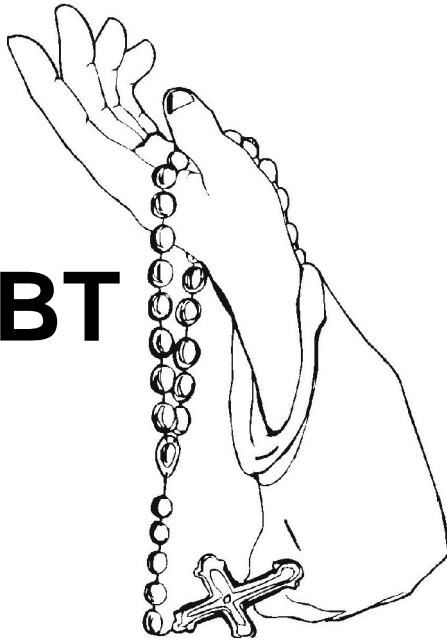
# Workshops Announced

Tupelo Community Theatre is planning to offer several workshops to our patrons and the community over the next few months. On May 24th professional lighting expert Josh Cochran will offer a two hour Beginners Theater Lighting class. The class will begin at 10 a.m. at the Lyric. Please call to let us know in advance that you are interested in attending.

We plan to follow this beginners class with several more workshops over the next year to help “grow” our pool of technical volunteers here at TCT. We are also busy planning workshops in Auditioning, Directing, Lyric Krewe/Volunteer and Set Design workshops to start in April and May. If you have interest in learning more about any of these areas or if you have suggestions for other workshop please call the TCT office at 662-844-1935.

# Doubt Represents TCT Well

## DOUBT



TCT was proud to represent our patrons and the state of Mississippi at the Southeastern Theatre Conference Community Theatre Festival March 5-9 in Chattanooga. Its production of *Doubt* had already won numerous awards at the Mississippi Theatre Association Festival in January, including Best Production, Overall Technical Excellence, Best Set Design. Jennifer Cummings won Best Actress and Allana Austin and Josh Mabus were named to the All Star Cast.

The adjudicators at SETC gave the cast and crew very favorable comments regarding their performance. At the awards celebration TCT won again for Best Scenic Design. Each year the host theatre gives an award to the theatre that is the easiest and nicest group to work with--kind of like "Miss Congeniality." TCT was happy to receive this award also. Chattanooga was the host when TCT was one of the winners of the 2004 SETC Festival with its pro-

duction of *Bel Canto*. Thanks to the *Doubt* cast and crew for giving their time and energy to this production!

In Chattanooga, the group enjoyed seeing some outstanding productions from the other nine states in the conference, as well as attending workshops and seminars. SETC truly helps our directors and actors hone their craft so we can continue to grow and improve. Congratulations to the Charleston Stage Company from West Virginia, the Community Theatre winners. Its production of *The Exonerated* was truly phenomenal.

In other SETC news, Lynn Nelson, a TCT Board Member, began to serve her two year term as SETC Community Theatre Division Vice Chair and will become the division chair for two years beginning in 2010. Tom Booth also serves on several SETC committees. Thanks to Lynn and Tom for serving SETC and representing Mississippi, as well as TCT, in these capacities.

Mississippi's High School representative from Oak Grove was the Secondary Division winner with its wonderful production of *Tales of Trickery*. Mississippi, as always, was well represented!

And just when we thought we could put *Doubt* to bed, we received a call from the Board of Directors at the Elkin Theatre in Aberdeen, inviting us to bring the show to its wonderful theatre space. Although Aberdeen does not have a community theatre at this time there is great interest in starting a group. The board is also interested in asking TCT to consider "touring" future shows to its community. Thanks to Bob Seymour, Sally Laird, and the Elkin Board for making a great evening and a special thanks to the Town and Country Fish and Steak House for staying open late so we could enjoy a late meal!

As you can see, TCT has been busy representing Tupelo well in northeast Mississippi, in the state and in the entire southeast region. We are well on our way to realizing our goal of becoming *THE* model of volunteer theatre. Thanks to all of our patrons for your support!

## 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  
 Beverly Clement  
 Tracie Maxey Conwill  
 Beth Stone Frick  
 Tommy Green  
 Kenneth Griswold  
 Craig Helmuth  
 David Hutson  
 Rosemary Jarrell

Steve McAlilly  
 Danny McKenzie  
 Lynn Nelson  
 Lisa Reed  
 Rob Rice  
 Debra Robison  
 Suzye Sheffield  
 Tonya Smith  
 Judd Wilson  
 Christina Womack

### EMERITUS

Jess Mark (1982-2008)  
 Gene Murphey  
 Ruth Liveakos (1969-2008)  
 Edith Thomas

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Tom Booth



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Season Sponsor: **BancorpSouth**

This project funded  
in part by a grant  
from the Mississippi  
Arts Commission



## Auditions for Summer Youth

Become a part of  
"A Whole New  
World" in *Aladdin Jr.*,  
Tupelo Community  
Theatre's Summer  
Youth Production.

*Aladdin Jr.* is a stage  
adaptation of the hit  
Disney musical that  
tells the story of the  
street urchin Aladdin.

He accidentally  
meets Princess Jasmine when she sneaks out of the  
palace to visit the marketplace in disguise. They fall in  
love, but Jasmine can only marry a prince. Aladdin discovers  
a magic lamp and unwittingly unleashes a wacky genie who  
grants him three wishes. But will it be enough to win  
the hand of Jasmine and save the kingdom from the evil  
Vizier Jafar? You'll have to see the show to find out!

Auditions will be held at Tupelo Community Theatre,



200 North Broadway  
on Sunday, April 20,  
2008 at 2:00 p.m.  
and Monday, April  
21, 2008 at 6:30 p.m.  
Those interested in  
auditioning must be  
rising first graders  
through sophomores  
in college. There are  
roles for boys and  
girls of all ages.

Singers and dancers are encouraged to audition but not all  
roles require singing and dancing. Strong dancers are  
needed for certain roles.

Production dates are June 19-21, 2008. For more  
information, contact Amye Gousset at 662-680-3288 or the  
theatre office at 662-844-1935. Mark your calendars now  
for the production dates. You and your family don't want to  
miss this wonderful production!