

Christmas Belles

Fayro, Texas isn't Wimberley. Or is it?

Imagine three squabbling members of a dysfunctional family trying to put on a Christmas pageant together in a small town like Fayro, Texas (pop. 3,003). The Futrelle sisters are definitely not in a festive mood, and anything that could possibly go wrong... does. The resulting mayhem forms the basis of the hilarious comedy, *Christmas Belles*, which opens November 28 at the Wimberley Playhouse.

The entire cast of the Fayro Christmas pageant is dropping out like flies due to food poisoning at the Band Boosters' Pancake Supper. While dealing with a Santa who has kidney stones, a shepherd who *must* have his little red wagon, and a reluctant Elvis impersonator who must guard the manger, Frankie Futrelle lets slip a family secret that has been carefully guarded for decades.

Christmas Belles is the second play in a trilogy by three playwrights, Jessie Jones, Nicholas Hope and James Wooten. The first play in the trilogy, *Dearly Departed*, was produced by the Wimberley Players twelve years ago. In true modern fashion, *Christmas Belles* is actually the prequel to the first play.

"This show is fun and colorful, and has an upbeat and meaningful ending," says director **Shirley Marlett**, who has acted in and directed numerous productions for the Players. Producer and onstage manager for *Christmas Belles* is **Linda Addeo**, who has been acting in or working on Players productions since 1992.

Kitty Nichols (*Barefoot in the Park*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*) plays Miss Geneva Musgrave, the deposed director of the previous 27 Christmas pageants. **Juli Dearington** plays the oldest Futrelle sister, hot-flashing Honey Raye, who agrees to be the neophyte director of the Tabernacle of the Lamb's Christmas Pageant more or less as community service. Dearington is also arranging and choreographing the show, along with Players veteran and First Baptist Music Minister **Dan Stephens**. A newcomer, **Amber Lackey**, plays Twink Futrelle; Amber is a recent graduate of Texas State with a BFA in Theater and French. The third sister, Frankie Futrelle Dubberly, nine months pregnant with twins, is played by **Whitney Marlett Mollahan**, who directed *Rose's Dilemma* and acted in *Bright Ideas* this year for the Players.

Perry Redden (*Rose's Dilemma* and *Bright Ideas*) is the deputy sheriff, John Curtis Buntner. **Meghan Nicholson** (*Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and *Anything Goes*) returns to the Wimberley stage as Gina Jo Dubberly. **Gary Yowell** (*The Gospel Accordin' to Texas*) plays Dub Dubberly, her father. Other cast members include **Angie Hasness** as Rhonda Lynn Lampley, **Gina**

McClure (see PlayMakers, this issue), as Patsy Price, the society matron, **Marvin Carson** as Raynerd Chisum, and **Jason Foreman** (*Man of La Mancha* and several Emily Ann productions) as Justin Waverly, who is trying woo Gina Jo.

"As long as your young children are accustomed to thinking of a department store Santa as a 'helper' of the real thing, there should be nothing objectionable in it for them," says director Marlett.

Christmas Belles will run weekends from November 28-December 14 at the Playhouse, 450 Old Kyle Road. Performances are 8:00 on Fridays and Saturdays and 2:30 on Sundays. On opening night, November 28, a special reception will be held before and after the show, with fine hors d'oeuvres and beverages.

Tickets can be reserved by phone starting November 17 by calling 847-0575. Beginning November 24, tickets will be available at the theatre box office Monday through Friday from 1:00-5:00. All tickets are \$15 except Opening Night (\$20). Visa and Mastercard are accepted.



Clockwise from far left: Kitty Nichols, Jason Foreman, Amber Lackey, Angie Hasness, Whitney Mollahan, Gina McClure, Marvin Carson, Meghan Nicholson, Perry Redden, Juli Dearington and Gary Yowell in driver's seat.



The making of *Dracula*

Count Dracula has been vanquished from Wimberley but lots of fond memories linger. A huge hit with old and new patrons, many claimed it was the best production the Players have ever done. Several members have asked, "How did they do that?"

As the director, I can say it definitely wasn't easy! After auditioning and selecting a stellar and fearless cast, the work really began. Costumes that could withstand a nightly drenching of blood had to be created and, thanks to Judith Laird and her crew, we had them. For those who asked if it was really blood, well, no. We used chocolate and strawberry syrup, lipstick, food coloring and other food stuff, depending on what scene we needed it for.

One of my favorite memories was watching the shy and timid vixens become horrifyingly aggressive. First we had to convince them to wear the costumes, then make the ugliest sounds they could. And speaking of sounds, we really nailed **Rick** and his Texas accent. But Rick researched the count and almost convinced us that Dracula actually grew up in South Transylvania. He also entertained us with endless alternative plot lines!



Some props were especially challenging. **Judith** found the dry ice needed for Renfield's cup. **Charlotte** and **Michael Caldwell** argued for weeks over how to create all of the bed effects. We ended up using TWO different beds. After Michael designed them my husband, **Ray**, heroically welded together what was needed. Michael and his crew then magically provided Dracula's magic to make a bed travel, Lucy's coffin swoop in and the cross turn into a blazing torch. "Gracie" (our skeleton), the lightning, thunder, fog and many other special effects were also created by this team.

What seems funny now is all the brainstorming over which nightgown the ladies should wear, how to make bedspreads with undetectable holes in them and whether **David** could actually eat a rat. **Dan** had a meltdown over having to compete with all the music in the show, and **Chris** broke an elbow after literally throwing him-

self into his role. We had to decide who was not claustrophobic and therefore able to get into the coffin and shake it -- that ended up being **Coy**.

Many have also asked about the gorgeous music and lights. I pulled the music from lots of different sources, such as old movie scores and classical CDs, and I am quite proud that it enhanced our production so well. My personal favorite piece was during the Dracula/Mina love scene. **Carl Galante** helped tremendously in making it all work and the cast was very patient in coordinating their actions and dialogue with the underscoring.

The lights were done by **Bill Peeler** and I know he just threw up his hands because I kept changing things after he had created a plan. But I was only going on his instructions! Well, that's my story and I'm sticking to it. Bill obviously overcame any obstacle from me and gave us such haunting beauty.

And God bless Charlotte, our producer! She and all of her assistants came through every time! She wore so many hats! She designed our set, painted it, ran around collecting set pieces, kept track of all the money, and finally, hosted our cast party. Now THAT is a producer!

And thanks to **Jim Gillock**. When our memories fade, we have the wonderful photos he took that document our frustrations, silliness, panic, triumph, fatigue and victory, as well as our emotional goodbyes when we struck the set. What an experience! I am so proud of *Dracula* and what we accomplished.

Lee Coleé-Atnip

Hugs and Kisses From Bill Meek

Yes, Wimberley's acclaimed glass artist Bill Meek is contributing several dozen elegant ornaments as a special fundraising item to benefit the Wimberley Players.

Created of Starfire glass and strung for hanging from your tree or in a window, the abstract shape suggests two figures hugging (vertical) or a pair of lips (horizontal). An ideal gift item, especially for sending a message of affection along with holiday greetings!

The Hugs and Kisses ornaments will be sold only in the Playhouse lobby during the run of *Christmas Belles*, beginning Friday Nov. 28. Because the quantity is limited, the ornaments are offered on a first come, first served basis (not by phone), with payment by cash or check only. Ornaments are \$25 each.

The Club that keeps on giving

Many thanks to the **Lions Club** for their generous gift of \$1,250 to the Players, which will be used for chair railings in the theatre. This safety feature has been needed for some time and was mentioned by several participants who attended the Focus Luncheons. We appreciate the Lions for helping us make your theatre experience safer and more comfortable.



At the Players' Hurricane Ike Benefit Concert and Dance on November 1, the "Schmoozers" hammed it up and sold raffle tickets. The five in bowler hats are: **Judith Laird, Jason Foreman, Rebecca Ferguson, Calvin White and Nancy Weaver**; they are joined by non-Schmoosier **Jana White**. The Players netted over \$9,300 to give to Galveston's Grand Opera House and the Gulf Coast Ike Relief Fund, and also collected a van-load of non-perishable food items for the Houston Food Bank.

The Mousetrap to run 4 weeks

The longest-running play in history will soon be on-stage in Wimberley! Agatha Christie's world-renowned *Mousetrap* will be presented by the Wimberley Players February 6-March 1, 2009.

The Mousetrap is a two-act drama, set in a remote English country inn. A small group of snowbound guests mysteriously becomes smaller and a trap is set for the killer! The director of *The Mousetrap* is **Lee Stubbs**, and the producer is **Barbara Alexander**.

Although Wimberley, unlike London, will not provide the stage for 23,000 performances of the play, the run for this production will be four weeks. Tickets will go on sale January 26.

Lee Coleé rings in 2009

A sublime voice and renowned personal style await audiences at Lee's New Year's show, entitled *A Jazz Cabaret*, opening December 29 for three evenings at the Wimberley Playhouse

Back by popular demand, Lee will be joined by composer and pianist **Phillip Foster**, with **George Prado** on the bass and **Scott Wade** on the drums. Also appearing will be nationally known pianist and bassoonist, **Suzanne Daniel**. The evening will be filled with favorite songs by Gershwin, as well as some forgotten but still loved standards, a bit of tap dancing and a surprise or two.

Foster, a prolific composer and fresh talent, will be presenting some exciting original songs alongside of Prado, who has played with Julie London, Peggy Lee, Broadway, and numerous other stars of the 60's and 70's. Wade is a well known percussionist who gained fame with his dirty car art form. He designed the sets for the Players' productions of *Deathtrap* and *Man of La Mancha* and also appeared in *La Mancha* as one of the muleteers.

Complimentary dessert and coffee will be served at intermission for each show. On New Year's Eve, there will also be very special hors d'oeuvres catered by Gourmet Gals and Guys. Reservation information is coming soon!

The gift of entertainment

Forget trudging the malls, scouring the catalogs— just call 847-0575 and order personalized Gift Certificates from the Wimberley Players. What an easy way to treat a friend, business associate, or family member to fabulous entertainment right here in Wimberley!

The lucky recipient of your Gift Certificate selects the play he or she wants to see, as well as the date and time. All remaining shows of 2008-2009 are included:

Christmas Belles: Nov. 28-Dec. 14

The Mousetrap: Feb. 6-March 1

Leading Ladies: April 17-May 3

Stop the World I Want to Get Off: July 31-Aug. 23

Gift Certificates are \$15 per ticket.

Starlight Symphony Christmas

The Starlight Symphony continues its six-year tradition of providing Central Texas with fine orchestra music, with two performances featuring your favorite Christmas tunes. One lucky audience member will also have the opportunity to conduct the symphony for the Christmas favorite *Sleigh Ride* in the popular annual raffle held by the orchestra.

The Starlight Symphony is under the direction of conductor **Cina Crisara**, currently in her fourth season. Since the symphony's humble beginnings, the ensemble has grown to over 55 members with a wide range of talent, from junior high school students to professional seasoned musicians. Members come from throughout the Central Texas corridor, from Austin to San Antonio. The Starlight Symphony Orchestra is an independent branch of the Wimberley Players and operates under their non-profit corporate charter.

You are invited to join the Starlight Symphony for a night of Christmas music that the entire family is sure to enjoy and mark your calendars now for the Spring Young Artist Showcase.

Holiday Concert

December 6 (Sat) 7:30pm

Old Blanco County Courthouse, Blanco, Texas

December 7 (Sun) 4:00pm

Old Glory Ranch, Wimberley, Texas

Young Artist Showcase

February 28 (Sat) 7:30pm

Canyon Lake High School, Fischer, Texas

March 1 (Sun) 4:00pm

Hays Performing Arts Center, Kyle, Texas

If you are a musician interested in performing with the Starlight Symphony, contact concert master **Pat Surguy** at (512) 858-0324 or dsurguy@austin.rr.com. For more information on the Starlight Symphony, visit the Starlight Symphony website at www.starlightsymphony.org.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

And Strike Up the Band!

The Wimberley Players will be 30 years old in 2009 and we're going to
KICK OFF the year with a BANG!

Please join all your Player Pals at the Playhouse

For the

Wimberley Players' Annual Membership Meeting *Celebrating 30 Years of Excellence*

Sunday, January 25, 2009, 6-8 p.m. (no football this date - we're having our own kick off!)

(Check in early at the door after 5:30 pm, pay your annual dues so that you can vote, then proceed to the theatre to find a great seat.)

The evening agenda will be:

Introductions – promptly at 6 pm – get to your seats on time!

Entertainment – *To Be Announced*

Short business meeting – election of board members, annual reports, all that biz.

The Drammy Awards – back by popular demand!

Light Buffet supper and sweets by Linda Allen Catering – creative feasting!

Start spreadin' the news – call your Player Pals and mark your 2009 calendars! The Wimberley Players' Annual Membership Meeting and 30th Anniversary Party will be a celebration you will not want to miss!

REMEMBER 2009 Membership dues – watch for the mail-out!

Players Pals at *Dracula* Opening Night



Gwen Sandefur,
Ashley Combs & Rob
Sandefur



Gayle & Ron
Weir



Kathy & Tom
Shaw



Joan & Geoffrey
Goetz (she was
seamstress for
Dracula)

Behind
the
curtain
with

P
L
A
Y
M
A
K
E
R
S

It's about all
the people who
magically transform a
starkly empty stage into a
wonderfully
performed and
produced play.

Proudly Published by The Wimberley Players

Vol. 4, Number 5

Gina McClure
She can do it all. What else is there?

The Playmaker sometimes wonders if praise for the Wimberley Players' friends and volunteers doesn't seem overblown. Perhaps, but exceptional volunteers just keep on coming to lend their enthusiasm and talent to the mix that has given us the "best little theatre in Texas." In this issue, it is our pleasure to introduce **Gina McClure**.

Gina and husband Mac McClure have taken a circuitous route since meeting each other in Graham, living in Mineral Wells and eventually moving to Wimberley on Christmas Day in 2000. Gina, who has a background in dance and theatre, worked with theatre groups in both Graham and Mineral Wells. She got acquainted with the Wimberley theatre scene when she was assigned to write a review as a pinch-hitter for Mac, who was then Editor of the Wimberley View. "I met and talked with **Judith Laird**. During our conversation, I mentioned that if the Players ever decided to put on *Steel Magnolias*, I would be first in line to audition because I had a longing to play the Sally Field role of M'Lynn."

Gina's first role with the Players came when **Rob Sandefur** convinced her to read for the role of Officer Grant in *Cahoots*. The chance to play M'Lynn came when the Players announced auditions for *Steel Magnolias*. She landed the part and worked with **David Bisett** in his first director's job after a long hiatus from the Players. From M'Lynn, Gina kept on rolling as the Young Ingenue, Belle and Mrs. Fred in *Christmas Carol* and the boozy Elma Blue in *Divorce Southern Style*. Her first role in a musical was in *Man of La Mancha*, a small but mighty one as the Taken Prisoner. Her most recent role was as a slithering Vixen in



Dracula and she is now in rehearsal in the role of yet another boozy character, Patsy Price in the delightful upcoming comedy, *Christmas Belles*.

Gina's work with the Players doesn't stop there. She has served as backstage manager in the production *On Golden Pond* and as assistant director and sound operator on *Death-trap*. On top of all that, Gina's offstage contributions include serving on the board of directors, being volunteer coordinator, and heading up publicity and graphic design for posters, invitations and press releases

for the recent fundraising benefit. She told us of her interest in getting into independent and feature-length films. When not at the theatre, Gina is Advertising Director for Valley Spring Communications, Inc., parent company of the Wimberley View, two sister papers, and a host of special publications. She's also the owner of her own graphic design business on the side.

Whew!

To sum it all up, Gina left us with this observation: "There is a great volunteer spirit here in Wimberley and at the end of the day, that's who I truly am and what I enjoy doing. Since moving here I've served as a Chamber Ambassador, was on the Arts from the Heart board for five years, and was chair or co-chair

of Arts' major fundraisers. Now I am focusing back where my roots seem to lead me, to the theatre. I've met some wonderful people and made some life-long friends there. The Players aren't the first non-profit organization I've been involved with and surely won't be my last, but for now, they are my passion. Being a volunteer doesn't pay the bills, but it is very fulfilling and makes me happy. What else is there?"



Gina as Elma Blue with Larry Landaker in
"Divorce Southern Style."

Not just an answering machine anymore.... Some really nice people who want to help

The Wimberley Players box office is in its third incarnation since the start of the theatre. For quite some time, it was the private telephone number of a Players member. Later on, the box office occupied space donated by Ozona Bank in the lobby of its drive-through facility. Then, with the completion of the new theatre, the first on-site box office opened and Kathy Gamel accepted the manager's job.

Kathy told us that managing the Wimberley Players box office for the last three years, as the theatre moved into its new home, has been both a challenging and rewarding job. In addition to taking charge of the new in-house facility, Kathy presided over the theatre's successful instituting of its first-ever offering of season tickets to members. The manager's job included the day-to-day work of the office, training of volunteers, setting of schedules and overseeing all the business details of the office during the run of each production.

After three years of service in this vital job, Kathy has decided that it is now time to pass the baton to new leadership. She has announced that Darlene Kukla is taking on the role as Box Office Manager and Linda Parker is accepting the new position of Assistant Box Office Manager. Kathy told us she is passing the torch to two volunteers who already have a record of doing a "superb job."

New Box Office Manager Darlene Kukla told Playmakers that she is originally from Houston and has lived in Wimberley for four years. She chaired the Civic Club's Hobby Lobby fundraising in '06 and '07 and is currently serving the club as First Vice President. Darlene has also been a volunteer with Angels for Elders in Wimberley for the past three years.

Linda Parker stepped into the Assistant Box Office Manager's job after volunteering with the Players for many years. In addition to box office service, she has been a house manager at both the old and new theatres. Linda has worked in the box office for two years and has helped with its development. Her other volunteer service is at the Wimberley Village Library.

Kathy told Playmakers that she thanks the Players Board of Directors and all of the box office volunteers for introducing her to the world of theatre and adds, "Wimberley Players volunteers are very special people who give their time for the love of our theatre. The community cannot thank them enough. If you think you are too busy, you are exactly whom we need. Remember, we are rich only through what we give."

If you would like more information on how to join the Playhouse's box office volunteers, call Darlene at 847-0575.



l to r: Kathy Gamel, Linda Parker and Darlene Kukla

Our special thanks to Mickey Trent for writing these and all previous Playmakers articles.