

Behind
the
curtain
with

PLAYMAKERS

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

We often mention in the PlayMakers section how fortunate the Wimberley Players have been in the amount of knowledge, talent and quality the many newcomers to the area have continued to bring to the organization. The married couple we introduce to you in this issue, realtors **Pam Shultz** and **Adam Witko**, are no exception to this happy rule.

Pam and Adam arrived in Wimberley in 1998, but only got involved with the Players organization last summer. That couldn't have been a better time for the Players since the new theatre was under construction and, as it turned out, Adam has vast experience and extraordinary credentials in just the kind of help needed to get the theatre property rigged, lighted and open in time for its September debut.

A graduate with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in technical direction from the North Carolina School of Arts, Adam



has an education in the major skill the theatre needed: design and production. Design and production encompasses all the

technical stuff such as lighting, sound, scenery, scenic art, costumes and rigging, even metalworking. In short, Adam has skills in everything that it takes to bring a play to the stage. When Adam joined as a volunteer at the Playhouse, he brought with him his 14 years of professional experience in everything from national touring music concerts in coliseums and stadiums, to full scale musicals, to production management, to most every kind of theatre or live production. The only area Adam told us he had not had experience in is film. "I worked in theatre production in all sorts of venues in many different cities and states in this country," Adam told us.

All his experience has certainly paid off for the theatre and for our patrons. Anyone connected with the new playhouse will tell you that Adam's tireless work and his knowledge of the nuts and bolts of the technical side of theatre have been instrumental in getting the new theatre open and terrific shows running.

Pamela Shultz is a graduate of the UT Department of Theatre & Dance with a BA in Dance & Theatre Management. Her



professional theatre experience has included stage management, box office management, house management and company management, although she has done a little of everything backstage at theatres across the country. In fact, she told us she and Adam met while both were working at The Goodspeed Opera House in East Haddam, Connecticut.

Pamela is currently producer for the upcoming Players production of Noel Coward's comedy *Blithe Spirit*. "A producer works closely with the director on a play," Pamela explained. "We recruit people to work onstage and backstage on the show, and most everything that is going to be needed for the production. Lately, we had need of a baby grand piano for *Blithe Spirit*."

That gives you some idea of the scope of things that must come together to get a show ready. Pamela told us the set for *Blithe Spirit* is a "box set" -- that is, a set that has three walls that form the living room of the play's manor house. "Everything is coming together nicely. We want to thank the many supporters who have loaned us the use of their period furniture and accessories."

PLAYMAKERS

There is only one kind of work that everyone notices when it is not done - housework.

In this article you are going to meet some of the volunteers who make your experience at the Wimberley Playhouse smooth and pleasant: the house managers. A house manager is part greeter, banker, concessionaire and diplomat. It's a behind-the-scenes job that all of the volunteers interviewed for this article mentioned they enjoy doing, in large part because of the chance to work with theatre patrons at each performance.



Jean Denny is an experienced house manager and likes all aspects of the job, except maybe getting on stage.

House managers see to the details that are important to getting your tickets, programs, seats and insuring your comfort and enjoyment when you come to the theatre. Did you enjoy your coffee? Thank the house manager who made sure it was ready and hot when you were served. Did you have help finding your seat? Thank the house manager and those who help her help you.

A house manager's touch is everywhere. **Dottie Sweeton** said that one of the things she likes to do when she is house manager is to prepare for each show by having all the reservations set up in alphabetical order so that when patrons pick up their tickets at the box office window, the process is quick and simple. That's only one example of the small, thoughtful touches that a house manager brings to theatre experience. Dottie noted the house manager's job in the new theatre is



Ginger Pierce thinks that house manager is a great job, especially when it's the Players' house.

much easier than it was at the old theatre. "It was harder to get things just right there. I like the job because people are such fun."

Jean Denny told us about the banker-bookkeeper part of the house manager's job. After each performance, the house manager does a report on the concessions sales and adds the information to the cashbox. "House managers used to go on stage, welcome the audience and make announcements, but that was one part of the job that I always left to someone else!"

When we talked with **Billie Reece**, she told us "I've been house manager two or three times and I really enjoyed it. There's plenty of help available if you need it, but the job isn't hard at all. It's mostly taking care of the cash box, seeing that the tickets are in order and ready to be picked up and being sure that the coffee, cookies and other concession items are ready when intermission comes. After intermission we help get people back into their seats, do a little clean up, make the cash box report and we're all done."

LouAnn Rosebraugh, a veteran of six years as a house manager, said she has recently gone on sabbatical. She found the job called for a diplomat on those rare occasions when there was a mix-up in seating. "It didn't happen often, but when it did, with a little diplomacy things could be straightened out to everyone's satisfaction."

If you'd like to be a house manager, give the theatre a call (847-1592).

Thanks to Mickey Trent for contributing these PlayMakers articles.