

Curtain Call

The Wimberley Players

For Our Members and Supporters

July, 2011

Hay Fever...

It'll make your eyes water...from laughing

Noel Coward's *Hay Fever* will open at the Wimberley Playhouse July 29th. If you are already a Noel Coward fan, this will become one of your favorites and if you've never seen a Noel Coward play, this production will most likely make you an enthusiastic new fan.

If you haven't really laughed in a while, be prepared to open up during this hilarious production where the laughs come often and sometimes unexpectedly. Not only will the words make you laugh, the situations will keep you in stitches and the interpersonal relationships will make you bust your sides. All of that might sound a little uncomfortable, but like most Coward comedies, you'll feel better when you leave than you did when you came in.

During his time, there were many, many Coward quotes and stories. There is one story that the late movie actor Robert Mitchum enjoyed telling about Coward: Mitchum was a guest at Eleanor Roosevelt's home. While looking around the home, he found a very feminine pink nightgown and as a gag, decided to put it on over his suit. Noel Coward walks in at that time and says, "My dear, you look simply divine!" and kisses Mitchum's hand. Next time Mitchum sees Eleanor, she says loudly, "Why, Bob, the last time we met you were in a pink nightgown being kissed by Noel Coward (not known for his masculinity). All the very masculine Mitchum could do was admit it.

Many theatrical critics over the years have regarded *Hay Fever* as Noel Coward's funniest play. It is set in the English country home of the Bliss family in the mid-1920s. The Bliss family is blatantly unconventional and darn proud of it. Mother Judith, the catalyst for much of the unconventionality, is a retired dramatic actress; husband David is a successful but temperamental writer; and their adult son and daughter



l to r: Amanda Forsyth, Linda Sriro and Devon Birdsong

are handsome and ill-mannered. One summer weekend, each family member has invited a guest to their country home without the knowledge of the other family members. Things develop immediately into wild situations, as each person is attracted to someone different from the original pairings. Various critics have described the play in these words: light, luminous, charming and hilarious.

The Playhouse production of *Hay Fever* is directed by **Laura Haygood**. Laura is new to the Playhouse and is an accomplished theatrical educator and brings a vast amount of experience and talent to this production. She has found the absolutely right cast for this Noel Coward comedy. Because, as Coward has admitted, *Hay Fever* does not have a clearly defined plot, it relies on hilarious situations, the actors' timing and their ability to deliver their lines superbly. The Bliss family includes **Linda Sriro** as Judith, **Bob Elliott** as husband David, **Amanda Forsyth** as daughter Sorel, **Devon Birdsong** as son Simon and **Cindy Forsyth** as family maid Clara. The guests include **Ashley Errico** as Myra, **Kevin Karwoski** as Richard, **Auston Newman** as Sandy and **Tiffany Patch** as Jackie.

Hay Fever runs from July 29 – August 21. Evening performances are Friday and Saturday night at 8 p.m. Sunday matinees are at 2:30 p.m. Tickets are \$18 each (\$20 on opening night, including a wine and cheese pre-show reception at 7 p.m.) and may be purchased at any time on-line at www.wimberleyplayers.org. The Box Office is open prior to each performance weekend during the following days and hours: Wednesday & Thursday, 2 - 5 p.m., and Fridays 2 - 6 p.m. Call 847-0575 and leave a message.

You're invited to visit the Bliss family's country home at the Playhouse. You won't leave disappointed.



True confessions of a Players volunteer

by Beverly Galante

Let's see. Where did it all begin? Ah, yes, "The Greenhouse." At first I thought it was the cutest theatre I had ever seen in my life. When my husband (**Carl Galante**, aka "big guy") was asked by **Lee Coleé** to play something like 15 different parts in *I Love you, You're Perfect, Now Change*, I thought, well, instead of being a theatre widow, I'd volunteer as crew. Understand, back almost 40 years ago, I crewed and designed sets for Community Theatre and that's when I met the big lug. A few years later we were married, brought up our kids, renovated houses, made a living. Nowhere in that time did we have much to do with theatre except maybe to pile the kids in the car for a night at the drive-in.

So, where was I? Oh, the Greenhouse. Miss Lee asked if I'd design her set for *I Love You*. Of course...I'm an artist, so why not? Then, "Perhaps you'd like to help back stage with props." Okay, sure... then, "While you're helping with props, could you help with costume changes?" Yes, no problem. "Maybe I have a small non-speaking part for you," she said. Oh NOW you're talking. My first cameo in Wimberley and I, being me, turned it into a comic role.

When they say the rest is history...

I was so privileged as to be in the cast of the first production at the new Playhouse, the time-honored production *1776*, directed by (you guessed it) Lee Coleé. This time it was an actual speaking part and even though I was supposed to be a guy, I worked it to death. Hubby and I spent our 30th wedding anniversary on stage during that run. Imagine Ben Franklin and Congressman Joseph Hewes married in 1776, spending their special day yelling at each other!

Shortly thereafter, having been really bit by the theatre bug, I volunteered many times at the Wimberley Playhouse doing different things behind the scenes. At one point, I ran the sound in the tech booth and saw my hubby's performance as Charles Condimine in *Blythe Spirit* for 13 whole nights!!!! Oh boy, THAT was fun. However, I did like being up in the apex to see what madness each performance would bring, which was a lot!

Costumes, set painting, upholstering, curtain operating, acting – what could be more fun than that? Well, to tell the truth, the real fun was getting to know people, making new friends and memories that would last for a lifetime.

Beverly Galante is an award-winning artist. She was raised in Boston, MA and is a true Yankee who now lives in Wimberley and is still learning to say "y'all." She received a full scholarship to Massachusetts College of Art and has had commissions as far and wide as Germany, Japan and Alaska.

Continued in next column...

She is also a writer - one published short story, numerous articles in publications and two unpublished (so far) novels under her belt. She has appeared in many musicals on the Emily Ann stage and was a member of the Second Act Troupe where she played many comic roles. Her acting career is at a standstill, as she wants to concentrate on her art and writing - and volunteering at the Playhouse, of course.

Hay Fever memories last a long time

Most of us can relate a time when the "theatre bug" first bit, gnawing away at one's sanity and casting a spotlight on anything thespian. For **Jane Dunham**, long-time Wimberley Players webmaster, the play was *Hay Fever* and the year was 1960.

"*Hay Fever* was our high school senior play," Jane says. "I went into the auditions at my hammy best and read for the part of Sorel Bliss. She opens with dramatic lines from a poem, which she is reading to her brother Simon. I read those words and some others further along in the play, where Sorel has another chance to be emotive. I probably got the part because I was able to wax melodramatic."

As the time approached for her 50th high school reunion last year, Jane found copies of the program for the play and a newspaper story and photo about it. One of the big topics of conversation at the reunion was the play. Although the players were all about the same age, David Bliss is still her "Dad" and Judith Bliss her "Mom." The three formed a bond on stage that has carried them through 50 years together. Simon Bliss, missing from this friendship for a long time, finally showed up halfway through the reunion, and the Bliss Family was complete once again.

"*Hay Fever*," she continues, "sparked my love for the theater. I delighted in the insight it gave into a completely oblivious family of egomaniacs who think they can invite guests to their home and then do as they wish, pairing up with each other's friends without thinking of repercussions. The ending is very funny, because the audience can easily see the negative results of their self-centeredness but the Bliss family members cannot."

Jane has seen the play in several other venues, and enjoys seeing how differently each director stages the comedy of manners. An avid playgoer now, she has season tickets to three theatre groups and attends most of the plays of two other groups. She especially looks for Noel Coward plays, because she likes the witty dialog.

And Jane says she will always remember the opening lines of *Hay Fever*: 'Love's a trollop stained with wine,' a poem that ends with 'God, why were we fashioned so?' "Actually," she says, "the privileged and bored Bliss Family fashioned their own lives in their careless, blissful way."



You say pō-tāy-tōe, I say pō-tôt-ō...

by Charlotte Caldwell

...but can anyone say aioli?

Is it ā-oh-lee or eye-oh-lee? The controversy reigns.

However you pronounce it, when you put the two together (potatoes and aioli), you have a little bit of heaven in your hand. And if you happened to attend any of the Players opening night pre-show receptions I catered in 2008 and 2009, you probably ate quite a few of those lovely little fingerling potatoes with that glorious garlicky sauce, aioli. They were a staple—some said my signature dish—and it seemed I could never make enough.

I could never make enough, that is, until the year I produced *Dracula* and also served as Hospitality Chairman. There were no fingerling potatoes to be found anywhere. In a panic, I phoned the vegetable buyer at Brookshire's, who in turn asked their produce vendor to get in touch with me and help me out. To my amazement I was Federal Expressed (gratis) fifteen pounds of fingerlings just in time for the reception—that is a lot of little potatoes. On *Dracula's* opening night I finally had leftovers!

My catering and hospitality days are behind me, but apparently there are a few patrons who still yearn for the wonderful marriage of flavors in this classic Provençal peasant dish. To get the recipe for this great tasting, elegant, and simple-to-prepare cocktail hors d'oeuvres, just log on to The Players website at www.wimberleyplayers.org. The recipe will be on the Home page, but stay around awhile and check us out. See what's new—what's old. Tell us what you think.

And by the way, ā-oh-lee or eye-o-lee...either is correct.

Charlotte Caldwell is the current VP of Marketing as well as the Database Manager for the Players. She assisted the VP of Membership and Volunteers in 2010, and served as Hospitality Chairman in 2008 and 2009. She has also designed sets, painted sets, produced and stage managed various shows for the Players during the past five years. She said to be sure and tell you, "Come on down. Watch. See. Do. We need each and every one of you!"



As former Hospitality Chairman, Charlotte was known for her elegant food presentations and her popular aioli (pictured in the foreground.)

How a play is produced... Play Selection

You may personally prefer musicals like *Stop The World*. Your neighbor probably enjoys comedies like the upcoming production of *Hay Fever*. Someone else prefers dramas like *The Heiress*. And maybe your spouse likes musical dramas like *Man of La Mancha*. Everyone has their likes and dislikes when it comes to live theatre. During 30 years of presenting all types of productions, the Players have always been able to intuitively select plays for production with many hits and some misses. Using intuition is a very subjective approach to play selection. In order to satisfy a wide variety of likes and dislikes, the Players have initiated a new and highly objective play selection process.

The first step starts with identifying what mix of plays will be selected for each season. The standard template for each season's five plays is now: at least one musical, one comedy and one drama. The second step is to identify and research a wide range of available scripts and eventually boil it down to a realistic sample of plays that fit within the standard template. This might include up to 20-30 different scripts for consideration.

The third and most critical step is giving the scripts to the Reading Committee for evaluation. This committee has approximately 10 members with a wide range of backgrounds. Like our audiences, they also have certain built-in preferences related to the types of plays they prefer. In order to neutralize their biases, they are asked to use objective categories for rating the content of each play. These categories include: Action (does it have a highly interesting plot); Characterization (does it have highly developed/interesting characters); Suspense/Dramatic Impact (can't wait to see how it ends); Plot Development (plot twists are expertly handled and neatly resolved); Entertainment Value (highly entertaining/amusing); and, Educational Value (intellectually challenging for actors and audiences). All of these content categories are then rated on a 1 to 5 scale and then an overall average is taken. This quantification of the content further increases the objectivity of the selection process.

Other factors considered in the selection process include: level of difficulty to direct or perform, audience appeal, language, level of controversial subject matter, physical and financial requirements, awards won, critical reviews. After all of these factors are considered and the quantifiable content evaluation is complete, the Reading Committee has finished its responsibility and their evaluations and recommendations are turned over to the Players' Artistic Team for final selection and scheduling of the season's five productions.

Curtain Call would like to thank Players' Executive Producer, **Adam Witko**, for his help in preparing this play selection installment. The next installment in this series will cover director selection and casting.

There is magic in these hills

I just have to share my excitement over the series of articles which start in this issue of *Curtain Call*, explaining how a play is produced (see "Play Selection" on page 3). Not only will they be informative, but I believe you will enjoy learning how the "magic" of theatre happens. We are so fortunate to have this outstanding live community theatre in our village, and the steps taken to transform a starkly empty stage into a wonderfully performed and produced play are many ... and the journey sometimes has a few detours! Presenting five plays in addition to Lee Coleé's summer camp does not leave much time for transitioning from one to the other - three to four weeks at best, from the strike of one set to the unveiling of the next. It all takes so many people, so much talent and so much hard work both on stage, behind the stage, and in the front of the house to give all of us the time of total escape into the magical realm of theatre.

The next time you attend a Players production, think about how many of your friends and neighbors are

devoting countless hours sharing their many gifts for these special magical moments. I love losing myself in the spirit of the story on the stage and always find some bit of humor, wisdom, or mystery that seems to linger long after the curtain closes. Both being exposed to the cutting edge of new productions or discovering how the classics are relevant today make my theatre experience enjoyable and worthwhile.

If you haven't been checking up on your membership investment in the Players lately, come see the remaining plays this season and witness your investment at work. Let the magic touch your lives - appreciate the live community theatre experience brought to you by the Wimberley Players - join in the applause - and go home eagerly anticipating the next play.

See you at the Playhouse,

Players Bulletin Board



Kay Allison, with "Pinocchio" lead, **Cody Claussen**. *Cody's dad Bill was in the cast of **Night Watch**.*



*Happy **Night Watch** attendees, **Eric Eskelund** and **Marilyn Wilson**.*



*Also enjoying **Night Watch**, **Pauline** and **Ron Tom** with friend, **Linda Freeman**.*



*Getting ready to see Act I of **Night Watch**, **Charles** and **Bernice Scott**.*



*Frequent Playhouse acting talent, **Perry Redden** with wife, **Donna**, a **Players** uber-volunteer.*



*Anxious to watch Act II of **Night Watch**, **Pat Daywood** and **John Bailey**.*

Curtain Call Staff

Charlotte Caldwell, VP Marketing/Publicity **Jim Gillock**, Publisher **Jane Dunham**, Feature Writer