



FRIENDS OF MONOMOY THEATRE, INC.

POST OFFICE BOX 169, CHATHAM, MASSACHUSETTS, 02633

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THE MAGPIE

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Holiday Greetings . . . and . . . Summer Memories

The Monomoy Theatre is a bleak place in winter. The doors are either locked or sheathed in plywood, the plants are dead and where the rehearsal tent stood there is now just a wooden floor covered with dead leaves. I sometimes walk the dog through the theatre grounds and it's hard to imagine just how full of life it was just a few months before.

The theatre begins to wake in June when a handful of students arrive to clean, paint and tidy the place. The window boxes are planted, the tables are brought from storage onto the patio, and the tent is erected. Then, on a Sunday just two weeks before the opening night, the rest of the company appears. Two weeks! Last year they had those two weeks to prepare *The Drowsy Chaperone*, a marvellous musical which began as an entertainment for two actors in Toronto who were getting married.



Their friends devised a spoof musical for the wedding, and that parody grew and changed and grew again until *The Drowsy Chaperone* won five



Tony Awards during its triumphant Broadway run. Bill Kux played 'the man in the chair' who talks to the audience about his love of

Broadway musicals and, especially, about his favorite

musical, *The Drowsy Chaperone* and, as he talks, the musical comes alive behind him. The show, directed by Mary O'Brady, was a delight with the lovely Karis Gallant playing Broadway star Janet van der Graff and Kyle Rudolph playing her fiancé, Bob Martin.

The real-life Janet and Bob were the couple who married in Toronto and thereby sparked this delightful comedy. The Monomoy production was choreographed by Kyle Brand and the musical director was Phil Rittner, and remember they only had two weeks! Two weeks to make the scenery, devise a lighting plot and rehearse a complicated production which, on stage, looks so effortless. The effort, in truth, is extraordinary, and The Cape Cod Times rewarded that hard work by telling its readers they would not see a better show on the Cape all summer.



That first musical runs for two weeks. During the first of those weeks the second production starts its rehearsals, last year that was *One Man, Two Guvnors*, a farce which, like most farces, demands split second timing. The play, by Richard Bean, is an adaptation of Carlo Goldoni's 18th Century hit *Servant of Two Masters*, and starred Nate Healey as the servant. Much of the play depends on the servant's quick and extemporaneous wit and Nate was perfectly cast. For a whole week that second production has the luxury of having all day to rehearse (while many of the cast members are also performing each night in the musical), but in their second week of rehearsal they lose the morning rehearsal time because the third production needs to begin.

That was *Arms and the Man*, George Bernard Shaw's comedy in which Raina Petkoff, a passionately patriotic young Serbian woman, inadvertently falls in love



with Captain Bluntschli, a Swiss mercenary who has been fighting on the side of Serbia's enemies. Madeleine Stevens was a charming Raina, Ellen Fiske was wonderful as her formidable mother, while Mark Pirolo was the guest director.

By the fourth week of the season the theatre is running in high gear. One production rehearsing in the morning, another in the afternoon, while a third is on stage at night. *Arms and the Man*, like most plays at Monomoy, had only a week of morning rehearsals and a week of afternoon rehearsals. The last performance is on a Saturday night and, as the audience goes home, the whole company takes down the set and starts building the new set for the next week. *Arms and the Man* was set in a Serbian home, but that all vanished overnight to be replaced by an American barn for John Steinbeck's lacerating *Of Mice and Men* which starred Kyle Rudolph as the big-hearted, slow-witted, doomed Lennie, and Billy Saunders as his friend who tries and fails to protect Lennie. The set was extraordinary and the acting powerful.

Time flies at Monomoy. Perhaps because the pace is so fast. It slows slightly in mid season because the fifth production is the second musical, last year it was a fantastic *The Fantasticks*, a love story with an enchanting score and witty script. Caroline Jackson, an incredibly talented actor, was enticing as 'the girl' and Mac Westcott, returning to Monomoy, gave an unforgettably funny performance as the aging Shakespearean actor. I say that the pace slows slightly because *The Fantasticks*, like *The Drowsy Chaperone*, ran for two weeks which meant that the sixth production, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, had a whole week of morning and afternoon rehearsals.

Bob Davis directed *The Tempest* and produced a taut, moving and spectacular show. The lighting was wonderful, bathing the stage in ethereal colors which perfectly matched Jelena Antanasljevic's beautiful costumes. Mad-die Stevens was a perfect Ariel, leading a dance troupe of airy spirits, Karis Gallant and Jack Plozay were the young lovers and Arlene Bozich played the grotesque Caliban. I had a small part too, playing the wonderful role of Prospero which I began learning in December, 2015, during Queen Mary 2's roughest crossing ever of



the Atlantic. We had winds of 115 mph across the deck and it seemed an appropriate place to immerse myself in *The Tempest*!

By mid-August the pace is as relentless as ever. Prospero's magic island vanished on Saturday night and, the next day, the stage was set for *Broadway Bound* which, that same night, had its technical rehearsal, a process that can go deep into the night. The set is usually unfinished for the 'tech', which is the moment (well, hours) in which the play's constituent parts, the actors, the sound cues, the lighting cues, the costumes and, for the two musicals, the orchestra, all come together for the first time. Most directors have the ambition of running the whole play during the tech, but usually by mid-



night they start skipping. Then comes Monday, which means rehearsals start for a new play, then the dress rehearsal Monday night! It truly is a relentless pace!

Broadway Bound was the third of Neil Simon's trilogy about Eugene Jerome, following *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and *Biloxi Blues*, which Monomoy performed respectively in 2014 and 2015. Nate Healey returned as Eugene, impressive as ever, while Ellen Fiske played his mother and Terry Layman, in a performance of stunning power, played his grandfather, Ben. And during the run of *Broadway Bound* the last play of the season, *Johnny on a Spot*, was enjoying its second week of rehearsals.

The season had begun with a spoof musical, it ended with a farce about, what else in 2016? An election! Charles MacArthur's play is about Governor Johnny, a drunkard and skirt-chaser, who, despite being dead, needs to be re-elected. It was a satire. Really? Even Charles MacArthur, author of *The Front Page*, could never have devised an election to match the real one of 2016, but at least our version provided plenty of laughter.



Saturday August 27th was the last night of the season. Playgoers went home and the company had to collapse the set and remove it. Next day the cast left for their colleges and the melancholy business of cleaning the theatre, the carpentry shop, the costume shop, the bedrooms and bathrooms began. Then the lights go out, the doors are locked, and you know winter is coming. Our revels of 2016 are ended, but what is now a bleak theatre will wake in June 2017, it will fill with young people who offer us hard work, dedication and the energy to survive the twelve weeks of incredible effort that makes the Monomoy Theatre such a vital part of Chatham's summer.

2016 Alan Rust Award

The annual Alan Rust Scholarship, originally created by a generous patron of the Monomoy Theatre is now sponsored by FOMT and awarded each summer to a student selected by members of the company. This year they chose Chris Bailey, a sophomore at the University of Hartford's Music Theatre Program. You saw Chris briefly onstage as the bailiff in *Johnny on a Spot* but his starring role this season was as a carpenter in the scene shop – a new experience for the 19 year old tenor. When asked his proudest accomplishment for the summer, his reply was “the set for Broadway Bound, it was amazing. We put a whole house onstage!” Congratulations!



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It Pays to be A Friend

The Friends of Monomoy Theater have existed as a behind-the-scenes, non-profit organization for many years. Could the theater function without the Friends? Probably so. However, we want to remind you that what you do is invaluable to ensure that we are all able to enjoy and provide this much-acclaimed educational and entertaining program in Chatham,

For example, during the past summer, your gifts provided more than \$34,000 as stipends for those skilled student entertainers you saw on the stage of The Monomoy Theater. You also provided for professional musicians who added significantly to your enjoyment. And there were many other aspects of operations that ran smoothly because of you.

To remind you of the value of your help, here are a sample of the reviews from a variety of Cape Cod newspaper drama critics.

- ♦ About *The Drowsy Chaperone*: “In five years I don't recall that I wrote that a performance was flawless (as he did) and that (this production) might prove to be the best of all (Cape Cod theaters) this season.”
- ♦ About *The Fantasticks*: “under the direction of the perennial and venerable Alan Rust, with top notch assistance from music director Phil Ritter and choreography (Kyle Brand), Monomoy's production surely will be among this year's cream of the crop.”
- ♦ About *Johnny On A Spot*: “As usual, Monomoy Theatre, in the final show of the 2016 season, does a remarkable job inhabiting the many characters “Johnny” introduces in rapid-fire style.”
- ♦ Amidst these, reviewers and audiences alike raved as the spoke or wrote about Steinbeck's *Of Mice And Men*, Neil Simon's *Broadway Bound*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Richard Beane's adaption of *One Man, Two Guvnors*, and George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and The Men*.

So we thank you all for your support, as we join together in supporting and enjoying the performances at the Monomoy Theatre. And special thanks go to those who have contributed financially to the non-profit Friends of Monomoy Theatre. If you want to participate in the continuation of this assistance, or join anew, a copy of a form for this purpose is included in this Magpie.



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As a FRIEND, your name will be printed in the Monomoy Theatre program insert and you will be invited to all FOMT functions.

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www.monomoytheatre.org