



FRIENDS OF MONOMOY THEATRE, INC.

POST OFFICE BOX 169, CHATHAM, MASSACHUSETTS, 02633

WINTER EDITION

# THE MAGPIE

December, 2013

## Looking Back at 2013 – A Season to Celebrate

by Bernard Cornwell

There comes a moment, some time in the middle of June, when we all meet in the Rehearsal Tent and read through the first musical of the season. Last year, of course, it was *The King and I*. It was a cold June day. Students who had arrived expecting to bask in a Cape Cod summer were wrapped in duvets, blankets, and thick coats, while Phil Rittner, our amazing Musical Director, was sitting at the piano in gloves and scarf. Welcome to Monomoy, 2013.

That first read-through happens just two weeks before the play opens. It's scary! You wonder how it could ever happen. Two weeks? To rehearse, to practice the choreography, to learn the music, to make

the costumes and the set? Yet every year the miracle does happen, and directed by Alan Rust, *The King and I* was a triumph. One comment in *The Cape Cod Times* was 'as good as Broadway!' We were so



lucky in having the delicious Holly Holcomb return to Monomoy to play Anna, and she was wonderfully partnered by Matt Faucher, a Monomoy alumnus returning as a fully-fledged Equity actor. Ralph Perkins's choreography delighted us, and



Brad Lee's set and Casey Watkins's costumes were brilliant. The season was off to a wonderful start!

From Bangkok we moved to the English coast and murder as only Agatha Christie could write it. *And Then There Were None* had the audience on the edge of



their seats as, one by one, the guests on the island were poisoned, bludgeoned, knifed or otherwise murdered. Who done it? I confess it was me what done it, but I received my comeuppance as the play ended with the happy couple surviving. So really it should have been *And Then There Were Two*.

And then there were two playing Oscar and Felix in Neil Simon's marvellous comedy *The Odd Couple*, and how well Emilio Tirri and Abraham Adams played the ill-suited room-mates.

Director Mary O'Brady kept the theater filled with laughter, while Alycia Kunkle and Alexis Semevolos were entrancing as the Pigeon sisters.





## Looking Back at 2013 (Continued)



That was the third play and we all felt the season had started brilliantly, and by now the cast were deep into Monomoy's treadmill; performing one play while rehearsing two others. *The Odd Couple* was followed by another comedy, the brittle

and witty *Hay Fever* by Noel Coward, an every day story of a ghastly weekend in the bosom of an eccentric family. Dennis and Shelley Delaney returned to play David and Judith Bliss, the host and hostess who put their guests through a romantic nightmare. It was a lovely production directed by Richard Mangan from London.

The season was half over! It goes so fast! It was time for the second musical, *She Loves Me*, and it sparkled! Monomoy favorite Kyle Brand returned as choreographer and to play the head waiter in the Budapest Café where the lovers, who have only communicated by letter, unwittingly meet. Jason Long and Alexis Semevolos played the hapless couple, and they were touchingly romantic. Monomoy's Artistic Director Alan Rust played Mr Maraczek and was doubtless relieved when the revolving stage revolved properly at every performance. It was a charming musical to begin the second half of the

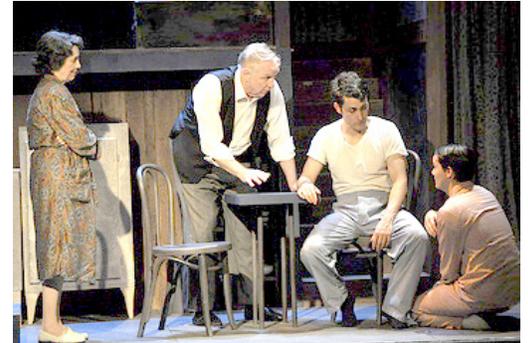


season. Jonathan Freeman directed and Phil Rittner, without scarf and gloves, was again the musical director and leader of the orchestra which is paid for by the Friends of Monomoy Theatre. Thank you!

Laughter had enlivened the first half (give or take a poisoning, bludgeoning and knifing), but Director Francesca James took us into darker territory with

a moving production of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*.

It was a triumph. Real life husband



and wife Terry Layman and Ellen Fiske played Willy and Linda Loman, and the two nights when I was in the audience I was struck by the tension and silence of the theater. *Death of a Salesman* is a classic and Monomoy did it justice.

It was followed by another classic piece of American theatre, Joseph Kesselring's *Arsenic and Old Lace*

which brought Nora Chester back to our stage. Nora played Martha Brewster, a murderous and sweet old lady who, with her sister Abby, played by Lisa Bol, provide a

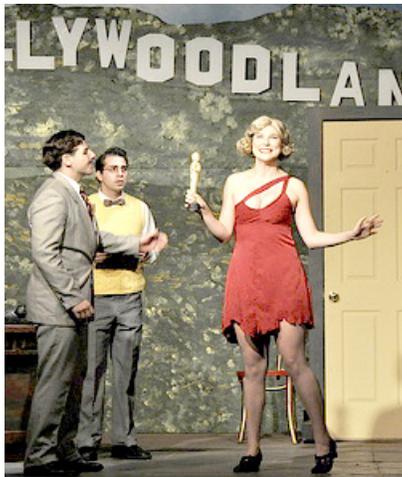


service of mercy killing for selected guests in their Brooklyn home. It is a wonderful black comedy and Nora and Lisa were outstanding as the sisters.

And then there was one. Just one play left, but what a way to end the season! Ken Ludwig's scintillating comedy *Shakespeare in Hollywood* is a brilliant satire on tinseltown, loosely based on the real life events surrounding the 1934 filming of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Lisa Bol appeared again,



this time as the dim starlet Lydia Lansing (Shakespeare is 'truly one of our great Americans!') and Abraham Adams made a terrific Oberon, somehow translated from Shakespeare's time to Hollywood. Alycia Kunkle was a superb Puck, the whole production was enchanting and funny and touching. We were so fortunate to have Max Williams from the Hartford Stage as our guest director.



And so it ended. It all went so fast! On the last night, after the curtain went down and the audience had left, the set of *Shakespeare in Hollywood* was struck and the stage left empty, except for the stool and broom that stay all winter, guardians of the characters that crossed the stage to delight us, amuse us and entertain us. It was truly a great season, and perhaps the best review of all came on the Bloomberg internet site in an essay by a visitor to the theatre who complimented the audience! He said you were a knowledgeable and sophisticated audience who deserved the high standard of theatre that Monomoy provides. So well done! And thank you for a memorable 2013, and see you all again in 2014.



## MONOMOY THEATRE WEBSITE

Visit the Monomoy Theatre website developed and donated by FOMT. Stay tuned for news on the upcoming season and special events. You'll also find links to reviews, previous editions of the *Magpie* and other media, including the Bloomberg article Bernard Cornwell cited in the Season Wrap-up.

[www.monomoytheatre.com](http://www.monomoytheatre.com)

### Donate to FOMT:

By joining and supporting the Friends you help bring the wonderful productions of Monomoy Theatre to Cape audiences.

FOMT subsidizes the theatre by funding the orchestras for both musicals, paying the stipends for more than half the student company, providing scholarships to company members and supporting essential theatre projects like the Eleanor Baker Steindler rehearsal tent, specialized scenic and sound equipment, and the theatre website. Last year, your donations purchased much needed and greatly appreciated air conditioning units for the company housing. Join the fun, come to the parties and meet the cast and crew!



## REMEMBERING JULIE

### An Actor's Actor

by Mary O'Brady

On closing night of the 2013 season, a remarkably bright full moon was rising above the theatre.

As we watched the company take their final bows for Shakespeare in Hollywood from the lobby, we learned of the passing of our beloved friend, Julie Harris.

A great deal has been written about the 6 time Tony winning actress since then. Her performances live on in the memory of those fortunate enough to have seen her on stage along with her luminous work on film. And, of course, there's *Knots Landing*, the popular 80's TV series, which she apparently agreed to in order to properly renovate her kitchen here in Chatham.

She graced the Monomoy stage on several occasions but we wanted to take a moment to acknowledge another of her great gifts – as extraordinary an actress as Julie was, her artistry may have been even more vivid as an audience member. For decades, Julie was a fixture on Wednesday nights at Monomoy. For most company members, the initial response was terror at the thought of the great Julie Harris in the front row but that began to evaporate the moment you caught sight of her and vanished completely when you saw her response at the curtain call. For hundreds of young actors (and some older ones) the memory of that beaming face looking up from the front row engaged, encouraging and often radiating sheer wonder is an indelible and treasured memory.

Julie truly loved actors and they loved her. Her kindness and generosity took many forms, the smiling photos we treasure, lunches, flowers, handwritten notes, even an iron paperweight in the shape of a pig. Holly Holcomb once admired it on a visit so Julie insisted she have it. It remains a treasured possession. When health problems made it difficult for her to attend performances, she often came to Monday

night dress rehearsals on the steady arm of her dear friend Francesca James. Despite struggles with speech after her stroke, she still managed to express her unabashed encouragement to the actors.

Her enthusiasm could not be contained by the walls of the theatre. Many years ago we opened the season with *Damn Yankees*, consequently the float in the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade consisted of the cast riding on a 24 foot long hot dog complete with giant pickle relish and followed by the company cooks dressed as human condiments. As we belted out "You Gotta Have Heart" for the 100<sup>th</sup> time we heard a commotion behind our flat-bed truck and there was Julie, running full tilt down Main St. between the ketchup and mustard, shouting, waving and snapping photos from beneath her enormous sun hat.

Alan Rust was fortunate enough to have worked with her when they performed in *Dear Liar* as George Bernard Shaw and his muse Mrs. Patrick Campbell. Alan recounted the first rehearsal. Seat-

ed, script in hand, side by side with the first lady of the American theatre, he spoke Shaw's opening line as "Our story begins at the turn of the last century, Queen Victoria was still on the phone." A guffaw, twice the size of her tiny frame emanated from Julie followed by "Oh, that made me so happy" At the evening's performance, she was slightly disappointed when Alan told the audience that "Queen Victoria was still on the throne."

Eleven years ago, the Monomoy performed a gala tribute to Julie and her remarkable career. The stage was hung with giant photos from her Broadway performances that still live in the rehearsal space. The evening ended with Michaeljohn McGann's beautiful rendition of "His Eye is on the Sparrow," the song that the great Ethel Waters sang to Julie in "Member of the Wedding" Near the end of the song, as the audience savored MichaelJohn's lovely tenor, he and those of us





huddled in the wings heard another voice, small and faint but steady from the front row. Julie, eyes wide and utterly rapt, was singing along in a delicate echo. That's the face we will all remember.

It seemed fitting that she left us on closing night. There's a ritual that Alan has preserved over the years. When the Monomoy Theatre was purchased, the previous owner had left a small stool with a broom resting on it center stage. At the end of each season, on closing night, when the



final set has been struck, the sets and costumes put away and the lights taken down, the company gathers



for a farewell moment and Alan returns the broom and the stool to the empty stage. This year he lovingly placed the photo of Julie as St. Joan there as well; center stage where she belonged. I like to believe that the full moon shone a little brighter that night like a celestial follow spot

as Julie beamed down on actors everywhere.

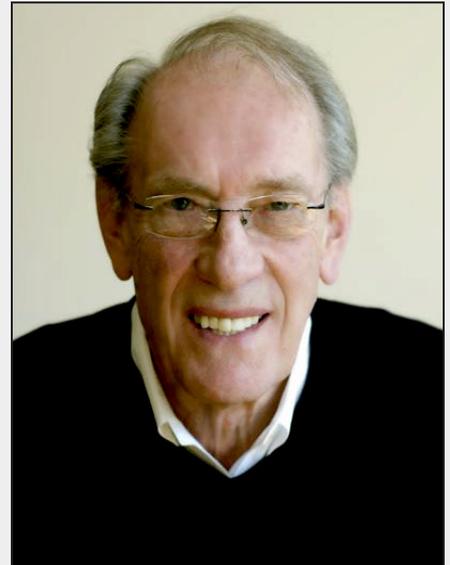
The final line of her obituary in the *New York Times* recounted an interview where she was asked what she would do today if she learned that the world would end tomorrow. "I'd go to the theater," she said. We're fortunate she came to ours.



### Malcolm Morrison 1940-2013

We are sad to report the loss of another long-time member of the Monomoy Theatre Family. Our dear friend Malcolm Morrison passed away on November 8, 2013. Malcolm was a frequent director and occasional actor at Monomoy, for more than 30 years. He patiently lead many company members through their first Shakespeare and in recent years several of his productions here featured his

wife Johanna including *Noises Off*, *The Lion in Winter* and *The Dresser* with Alan Rust as *Sir*, a role that Malcolm



himself performed here in the 1990's. Once he even ventured bravely into the musical theater world, appearing as Max in *The Sound of Music*. As Dean of the Hartt School at the University of Hartford from 1996-2008 and before that head of the Theatre Division at North Carolina School of the Arts, for decades he and Alan worked side by side across the country and around the world. He will be deeply missed.



## Alan Rust Award . . . goes to Blake Leo Burke

This year's Alan Rust award went to Blake Leo Burke. Known as Jo-Jo to the company, Blake was the Props Master this past summer and is currently studying Design and Production at Eastern Carolina University. From the antique barometer in an English country house, to the frills of a Budapest perfumery to Oscar Madison's autographed sports memorabilia, his tireless work was on display in every production.



## First Night Chatham 2013

Join members of the Monomoy Company to help Chatham *Roll Out the Red Carpet* and ring in the New Year! The Monomoy Players will be creating their usual wonderment at 9:00 p.m. at the Orpheum Theater.

Performers include Jimmy Bain, Terry Caza, Ellen Fiske, Holly Holcomb, Michael Hornig, Sarah Killough, Terry Layman, Mary O'Brady, Ricky Oliver, Kyle Rudolph Alan Rust, and Colleen Welsh. Don't miss it!

If you plan to attend First Night Chatham and enjoy the Monomoy Players, remember to purchase your button early . . . First Night Chatham is often a sell-out!



**Hibernating . . . until next summer!**



***Baby it's cold outside!*** It's supposed to be chilly in December but on rainy days in June there are few places as bone chilling as the rehearsal tent. And when the sun goes down, there aren't enough sweatshirts on the planet (let alone at Cuffy's) to keep the actors warm.

The Friends are hoping to purchase water and wind-proof tent flaps to protect the company and possibly the Kick Off party from the perils of Cape Cod spring. Please help if you can with a year-end contribution.



**Special thanks to all of our Matching Funds donors**

**You made a big difference this year!**

If your employer or former employer offers charitable matching funds, this is a tremendously helpful way to support the Monomoy Theatre.

***We deeply appreciate year-end donations!***

**BE A FRIEND: BRING A FRIEND: JOIN F.O.M.T**

Make a tax-deductible contribution to the Friends of Monomoy Theatre\*

FOMT Circle	\$1,000+	Benefactor	\$500-\$999	Patron	\$250-499
Sponsor	\$100-\$249	Family	\$ 50 - \$99	Individual	\$ 30 - \$49

Enclosed is my check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ payable to FOMT, Box 169, Chatham MA 02633

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\*If your company has a matching program, please consider completing the necessary forms.

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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This year's annual meeting was held on August 4 at the theatre. There were few changes to the Board of Directors this year. We welcome the addition of Kay Bryce to the board and thank Scott Hamilton for taking on the role of Vice President. Sadly, we will deeply miss long-term honorary board director, Julie Harris

The board for 2013- 2014 is as follows:

President – Mary O'Brady

Vice President – Scott Hamilton

Secretary – Cecile Maranhas

Treasurer – Terry Layman

Board Directors - Jean Axline, Bernard Cornwell, Gay Murdoch, Carol Penfield, Mauny Plum, Marsha Predovic, Jan Rust and Catherine Steindler

**Happy Holidays!**



**GIFT CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE!**

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with details of your purchase.

Sorry, at this time we can not accept credit cards.

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***Our 2014 season will be announced early next year.***

***Check the website!***

Season Tickets (8 shows) \$200 - Evenings;

\$175 - Thursday matinees

Individual shows: Evenings - \$30; Matinees - \$25