

# Tawas Bay Players Newsletter

## September/October 2017

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### **Greater Tuna by Ray Skiver**

Pam asked if I would share a few thoughts about my adventures as a first time director. My original draft was quickly turning into an epic tale of how *Greater Tuna* (2017) came to be. Luckily, I realized that no one finds my storytelling nearly as entertaining as I do so and I scraped that version. Instead of a tale to rival *The Odyssey*, I've opted instead for a hopefully more cohesive and to the point article. First off, I would like to offer some much deserved thanks to some wonderfully supportive people. I have to thank Alan Dalton for asking me to A.D. *I'll Be Back Before Midnight* with him. I'm not sure why he thought I might take to this directing thing but I'm beginning to think he might be on to something. Also working with us on that production was Keith Frank. Keith was the person who suggested I direct "Tuna" since Deb had passed away. Thank you sir, for thinking I could pull this off and encouraging me throughout the entire process to forge ahead and give it my best. Keith patiently listened (on more than one occasion) to my trials and tribulations and was always supportive from before tryouts were even held right up until the show wrapped. Thanks again to you both.

Now that we're actually to the production, I have to thank "my crew". They were AMAZING(!!!). They consistently came through for me no matter how bizarre my requests were. From my nit picking about costumes and sound cues to my ridiculous idea of having a real coffin on stage and that (Awesome!) lighted "OKKK" sign center stage. So Nick, Ed, Jay, Alexandra, Lynne, Jody, Amy, Eric, Mike, Alan, Tara and Pat, THANK YOU ALL! To those of you lucky enough to deal directly with my producers and not have to tolerate my seemingly unavoidable nervous breakdown, THANK YOU as well! I also asked a seemingly endless barrage of questions to people who did not "work" on the play. Thank you all for taking the time to give me your input. I hope the fact that I listened was obvious in the finished production.

I have to take a moment to point out (in case, like myself, you sometimes forget) how important every job on a production is. I have to admit, working primarily in the booth and onstage I've often taken for granted all the other people that do all of those less than glamorous, seemingly thankless jobs. Until you're put in a position (like director) to have to think of all of those things, it's easy to overlook the commitments and contributions made by many, many other people. Whether doing refreshments, pictures, managing the house or handling tickets and reservations (I had reservations but, I came anyway.) no job is more important than any other and if I've failed to express my appreciation for all you do in the past, please accept my sincerest apologies.

My next obvious round of thanks has to go to my producer. Thank you June (Love) for taking the time to produce my little "dog and pony" show. You were always calm throughout the entire process. Even as I was panicking on Dress Rehearsal night, you were gently telling me it would all be "okay" (with the appropriate amount of proper English accent of course). We've done so many shows together over the years and you're still teaching me about theater and more importantly, about life. I'm a better person for knowing you and that is by no means, an exaggeration.

My assistant producer was Stacy Perrot. Stacy was foolish enough to say "yes" when I asked her to "help" with my show. I don't think she realized quite what that would entail. Stacy ended up unintentionally, being my A.D. as well. I was the only person who was at the theater more than she was and she was there when I couldn't be. I also invaded her home on nights we weren't rehearsing to work with her daughter, Alexandra on music and sound effects. She procured the above mentioned coffin and it was her idea to have all the character's pictures on the board. Mostly though, she listened to all of my ideas and calmed me when I couldn't communicate those ideas to other people. She even answered my calls while she was on vacation (during hell week) just so I could yell about all the things that weren't getting done (they all did). Thank you so much, for helping me realize my "vision".

I guess that leaves my cast. What can I possibly say about those crazy, outspoken, silly, talented young people? WOW!!! When I decided to hold the second round of auditions, I had no idea I was going to end up with such an inspiring group of people. I had worked with Neal and Ryan at Witt's End in the past and thought that they could pull it off. I personally

asked them both to try out. When I heard that there might be other students interested, I got the word out at the high school and invited anyone with any experience to audition.

After hearing everyone read I was torn up about having tell two of them that they didn't get cast when I realized, I didn't have to. I am so glad I decided to cast them all. I can't imagine having done this show without each and every one of them. They worked harder than I asked them to and never ceased to amaze me with what they brought to the stage. I'm sure I learned as much from them about myself and directing as they learned from me. I am so thankful that they were my very first cast. They let me try things that I might not have had the courage to do with a more experienced cast. They constantly challenged me with well thought-out questions and ideas. They deserve as much credit as anyone for the quality of the play. So "THANK YOU" Madi, Ryan, Emma and Neil for letting me push you around and for putting up with me for the better part of six weeks.

Before I get around to wrapping this up (believe me, this is the short version), I want to touch on a couple of important things I learned while working on this show. The first is this, if you say you're going to help with a play, do it! I understand that things come up and we sometimes have to bow out of commitments. However when nearly a dozen people tell you that they'll do a job and then they never even bother to show up, I can't help but think that there are people among us that don't understand that "membership" comes with some obligations. Sorry if that comes off as rude, but it's the truth.

Secondly, we as a group have been watching the average age of our members increase with every passing year. We so often find ourselves worrying about where the next batch of TBPers will come from while actually doing little to encourage them to get involved. I think this show proved that they are out there and they are willing, able and talented enough to pick up the torch and run with it. I don't claim to have the answers as to how best pique their interest but I know that we can't (as an organization) just sit back and wait for them to knock on our door. I'm not just talking about teenagers either. The youngest person in "Midnight" was 40 in a play written for a cast of twenty somethings. We have to try harder!!!

Lastly, I want to thank the TBP Board for trusting me with a play. I hope you all realize that I didn't take this responsibility lightly. I'm proud of the work we've done as a group over the years and I went into this experience with the bar set pretty high for myself. I realized that I was following in the footsteps of some of my own, personal heroes and I didn't want to let them down. It was a wonderful adventure and learning experience and I hope to be lucky enough to be allowed to do it again sometime (in the distant future). If you're still reading (WHY???), thank you for taking the time to read the ramblings of an already senile old fool. See you at "The Theater".

Cast and crew of Greater Tuna mentioned in the article— Madi Galli, Emma Brownell, Ryan Kaiserman, Neil Petersen, Nick Lojek, Ed Krebs, Alexandra Perrot, Jay Rock, Lynne Meyer, Jody Provost, Amy Peterson, Eric Perrot, Mike Merluzzi, Alan Dalton, Tara Western, Pat Casey, June Hudgins



## 2017 Annual Meeting by Keith Frank

The 2017 Annual Meeting was held at the East Tawas Knights of Columbus Hall on Friday, August 11. 40 members and guests were in attendance. A very nice meal of chicken, beef and vegetable lasagna was prepared for us by the Knights. Before the start of the meeting, all members who volunteered at the theater this year in any capacity were recognized. The following items were discussed:

### Old Business:

- a) Murder Mystery, "Murder at Roswell": Presented in conjunction with the Knights of Columbus. 2 performances in January saw a net revenue of \$2,147.58. A second "free" performance was given as part of Perchville and was very well received. Within five minutes of the doors opening, we were sold out.
- b) Refreshment Room Naming: From last year's meeting, in honor of June Hudgins, the theater refreshment room has been named Hudgins Hall. A Coat of Arms was painted by Carol Kushion and a Plaque honoring June has been made. A big THANK YOU to artist Carol Kushion for her fine and generous work.
- c) Founders Plaque: Due to much confusion over who all of the Founders were, the plaque is not going up for display until further research on names to include is completed.
- d) Memorial Bench: No input was sent to Keith after he made a newsletter request, but lots of ideas talked about tonight. No decision was made and the Board will continue to investigate.

### New Business:

- a) 2018 Annual Meeting: Knights of Columbus will welcome us back. 2018 Annual Meeting is scheduled for Friday, August 10, 2018. Please mark your calendars and save the date.
- b) Camp Cedar Ridge Production of "Queen E": Netted us \$264.80 which was not a great fortune, but there was a lot of good will and support of the arts.
- c) "Psychic Cabaret": Michael Jons donated performance was sold out, netting us \$1,505.00. The show was very popular and entertaining. Mr. Jons is interested in a return visit with a possibility of two performances next year. Stay tuned!
- d) Bike Rack at Theater: At the Board's last regular meeting, a discussion was held regarding placing a bike rack at the theater. A suggestion was made to have Alan Dalton create a unique bike rack out of bicycle parts that would allow safe parking at the theater. Alan was contacted and he is very interested in building one.
- e) Free Tickets for Advertisers: The board has reinstated two (2) free season's tickets to advertisers who take out a full-page ad in all 4 programs this year.
- f) High School Dress Rehearsal Attendance: We will continue last year's policy, allowing 10 students per local school to attend dress rehearsal with signed parental approval and adult accompaniment either by the teacher or assigned by the teacher.
- g) New Stage Lights: Pat Casey, Nick Lojeck and Chris Mundy have installed four new stage lights with directional control from the sound booth. They also have repaired the Star Curtain and it is set and ready for use.
- h) New Doors: Keith shared the Board's decision to authorize the purchase of four new doors to be installed, one on Lincoln Street, one on Newman Street, the kitchen door and one on the wardrobe room. Barry Schley will do the work at a cost of \$2,450.00. Installation is tentatively scheduled for Friday, September 1.
- i) CCTV: Pat Casey is researching a closed circuit TV system for backstage viewing. This would be in memory of George Robson, at his request, and using money donated in his name.
- j) Background Checks: The Board is working on having a background check policy for all adults working with youth under 16. More research is needed.
- k) Deb DeBois Memorial Scholarship: Pat and Keith requested approval from the Board to combine some of the money from the Scholarship Fund with money received in memory of Deb to create a scholarship fund in Deb's honor for further education in a theater related field. Approval was unanimously given.
- l) Donna Thomas Resignation: Donna resigned from the board due to her moving out of the area in May. Dennis Szatkowski was appointed to fill her position until the Annual Meeting, at which time the membership will elect a permanent replacement.
- m) Election of Board Members: Incumbents running were Chris Mundy, Michal Jacot, and Dennis Szatkowski (Donna's appointed replacement). Sharon Langley did not seek reelection. Also on the ballot were Rodger McElveen, Craig Sayer and Eric Perrot. The four receiving the most votes were elected. They were Chris Mundy, Michal Jacot, Craig Sayer and Dennis Szatkowski.

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### **Congratulations to our Newest Founders Award Recipient**

One of the highlights of the annual membership meeting each year is the selection of the Founders Award winner. Like last year's winner Bob O'Meara, this year's recipient is a man who is very familiar with working behind the scenes. Mike Merluzzi is an extremely talented designer, builder and painter. We always talk about shedding blood, sweat and tears for a show but he is one of the few members to take this literally. He is very artistic and creative, I sure everyone has admired his work. Not to mention that he is an awful lot of fun to have around. Congratulations Mike!



### **You Missed A Good One! By Sharon Langley**

Sue Duncan and I attended the Community Theatre Association Summer Master Class on July 14,15 and 16th at the Ralph A. MacMillan Conference Center on Higgins Lake. The camp facilities were amazing. Great meeting spaces, wonderful meals and outdoor areas right on the beautiful lake.

Sue and I took part in Leeds Bird's classes on "Acting vs Directing Concepts". These concepts increase the pleasure of the actor, director and the experience of the audience. We looked at reading a play and understanding it's structure; understanding the physical actor on stage and guiding the actor to perform through non-verbal communication. The whole group took part in exercises where we took turns directing and acting in skits to look at aspects of focus, nonverbal communication and staging. They were great fun and really got us to know the people in our group and make new friends. The experience was will worth going and I can't wait for next year. Tawas Bay Players and CTAM offer scholarships to help get you there. See you next year!

### **I Can See Clearly Now...by Pat Casey**

In case you haven't heard, the board invested in some new lights for the stage. Thanks to member Nick Lojek, the stage is looking much brighter everywhere! No dead spots will be found when he gets done. He's young and doesn't mind climbing up to the top of the scaffolding. I kept telling him, "Do NOT fall!" He just laughs and says not to worry. While he was up there installing two of the new lights, we (Bob O'Meara, Dennis Szatkowski, Pam Dibert & I – the muscle power behind putting up the scaffolding) asked if he would check out the star curtain. It hasn't worked in years BUT thanks to Nick and three LED lights, we have stars again. Getting back to the new lights...these are amazing. They are

LEDs that have built in gobos (A **gobo** or **GOBO** - short for "goes before optics" or, less commonly, "graphical optical black out" is a physical stencil or template that is placed inside or in front of a light source, to control the shape of the emitted light), can change to eight different colors (I think eight) AND can be rotated up/down, left/right, zoom in/out all from the light board!!!! No more climbing up on a ladder that we weren't always certain would stay there. OK, we still do have to adjust the old lights a little bit but hopefully we will be adding some more lighting in the future. Once Nick gets finished with the row of lights above the seats, he will head up to the tech booth to install the other two new LED lights. These will have a wider range for the zoom and again, be controlled by the light board. Hopefully you will see some of the new lighting effects in our next show, *Snow White & the Seven Dwarfs*! If you see Nick (Red hair and works out at Art Van) please thank him for going above and beyond for us!

### Sharing the Summer Stage by Susan Duncan

**Queen E: The Reluctant Royal** was a play telling the Biblical story of Queen Esther with some modern songs and laugh lines. The final outcome and lesson was every bit as crucial today as it was then; respect for everyone's religion. Tawas Bay Players hosted the members of The Huron Forest Camp CedarRidge Performing Arts Company for a week in June that led up to the world premiere concert musical presentation performances. The performers and crew of technicians and musicians came from a number of states (ten to be exact) to attend camp and perform in this and/or the following weekend's performance of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* which was staged at Oscoda High School. Some members of the group were high school age, some in college and a few are theater professionals. All of them were super appreciative, of good cheer and hardworking. In only one week they put together two entertaining evenings for our local audience as well as many of their friends and family that followed them to the area. Jessica French, the artistic director of the play and of the whole camp experience expressed sincere thanks numerous times for the help and generosity of TBP in making this dream a reality!

**Beauty and the Beast** may have been performed in Oscoda, but most of the props and set pieces came from TBP. (Did you recognize any?) If you attended either of the performances you probably recognized many of the performers as well. Carter Chrivia of Hale, Zach Dalton, Ryan Kaiserman, Alexandra Perot, Neil Peterson, all of Tawas, as well as Arden Torgusen of Au Gres and Arina Wade previously from Tawas, now living in North Carolina. Some of these fine young local thespians have been on our stage, ALL of them have worked with Suzan Dunham at Witz's End or in WE Players. We have many reasons for which to be proud. A bountiful source of material goods we can share, talented youth with supportive families and TBP members who support the arts in many ways. A big thanks to all who helped!

### Snow White & the Seven Dwarfs by Pat Casey

We had tryouts on August 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>. There was a great turnout which made our decisions very difficult. Some new bodies, some not so new! After much discussion, June Hudgins, Pat Casey (Co-Directors) and Penny Zacharias (Assistant Director) came up with a cast that is sure to be a hit! We do want to thank all that tried out and hopefully those that didn't make the cast will help behind-the-scenes.



#### Cast Members

Snow White..... Patricia King  
 Queen..... Michele Forcier  
 Woodsman/Prince..... David Wajda  
 Mirror..... Chris Mundy

Scrubber..... Elaine Shmina  
 Blubber..... Pam Koepke  
 Scotty..... Kathleen Rowe  
 Flubber..... Penny Zacharias  
 Pepito..... Barb Hunter  
 Fred..... Laurie Jacot  
 Mosquito..... Curtis Davenport

Believe it or not, our set was built before tryouts!!!! Special thanks to Bob O'Meara (head construction guy), Dennis Szatkowski, Mike Merluzzi, and Al Bixby. These guys were great and very patient working in the various set pieces. Next up is the painting under the direction of Mike Merluzzi.

There are still people needed for behind-the-scenes so please get hold of our trusty producers, Judy Quarters and Vickie Szatkowski if you would like to volunteer. Mary Ann Michalski is our house manager and will gladly take volunteers for various jobs, too. CJ Brummeler is our choreographer and will begin taking the cast through their steps in the near future! Hope to see you at the show in October.

## **Bet You Didn't See That Coming....Psychic Cabaret Visits Tawas Bay Playhouse By Michal Jacot**

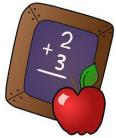
On July 29 our playhouse held a special one-night entertainment event, *Michael Jons' Psychic Cabaret*. I'll get to just how much fun it was in just a minute, but before I go there I want to tell you the story behind it. It involves a family connection, a generous man, and a few TBPers willing to work on the fly.

Our board of directors received a rather unusual e-mail a couple of months back. Michael Jons, an entertainer in the Washington, D.C. area, contacted us out of the blue. He explained that his mother lives in the Tawas area and that he enjoyed visiting our town for family vacations. He told us about his show, a hilarious mix of mind-reading and fortune-telling. And then he made us an offer we couldn't refuse. He would be in the Tawas area for couple of weeks and, while here, he'd be willing to present his show at the Tawas Bay Playhouse. And he would do it for free. We googled him and found out about his act. It's a highly entertaining and informative stage show that has been quite successful in the Washington, D.C. area for a while now. And, I might add, his prices are around \$59 per ticket. And here he was, approaching us with an offer to do his show for us for nothing. It was *very* easy to say yes to this offer.

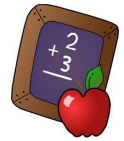
Now it was just a matter of pulling the show together. We had to quickly put the word out with posters and flyers, we had to print tickets, we had to find some of our people willing to do lights, ushering, all that stuff. We decided on a bare-bones show with no intermission or refreshments, to make it easy on ourselves. The printed stuff was easy enough since Mr. Jons himself sent us ready-made posters, flyers, and press releases. We elected to keep the price low as an incentive for our area, so we went with \$12 a ticket. I predicted at the board meeting that we would have a sellout night. And if we did, along with minimal expenses, we stood to have a pretty nice fundraiser on our hands.

Michael Jons' Psychic Cabaret was an evening of fun, just the type of unusual show our summer crowd was itching for. Michael showed us some amazing mental tricks that stunned the audience. He explained the fascinating history behind fortune telling and tarot cards. And through it all, he kept us all laughing, because he's just a funny guy. One highlight of the evening involved picking people from the audience and testing their lying skills. As Michael explained, there was no mysticism involved here; it was a matter of reading body language, as Sherlock Holmes often did. On a side note, I am apparently a terrible liar. Another highlight was watching Penny Zacharias cringe as she pressed a staple gun against Michael's face and pulled the trigger. I've seen variations on this before but it never fails to make me squirm, always wondering "what if something goes wrong...?" (From the look on Penny's face, I'd bet that same thought was going through her mind.) Everyone enjoyed the show, and gave Michael Jons a well-deserved standing ovation. He apparently had fun too, because he offered to come back again next summer and do it all again (maybe running it for two nights). You're on, Mr. Jons!

We had a successful evening event thanks to some TBP members who helped throw the show together, a receptive audience who supported us and especially to the kindness and generosity of Michael Jons who offered us his unusual talents and charm to us. And yes, we did have a sold-out house. Even an amateur fortune teller like me could have predicted that.



# Happy Birthday



## August

- 4 Brenda Chadwick
- 4 Reesie Smith
- 12 June Hudgins
- 15 Jeff Chadwick
- 15 Brian Shmina
- 20 Shirley Robson
- 23 Bob Zacharias
- 23 Charleson Shuart
- 24 Jolene Grusecki
- 29 Pam Koepke
- 30 Phyllis Spencer

## September

- 3 Laken Buchanan
- 20 Elaine Shmina
- 21 Tara Western
- 29 Tom King
- 30 Vicki Sanborn

## October

- 3 Lyn Behnke
- 4 Nadeen O'Meara
- 6 Chelewynne Shuart
- 13 Tom O'Malley
- 18 Brady Jacot

## November

- 2 Chris Mundy
- 13 Sharon Langley
- 14 Tom Shmina
- 24 Felicisimo Abis
- 25 Mendy Shmina



## Photos from *Greater Tuna*



