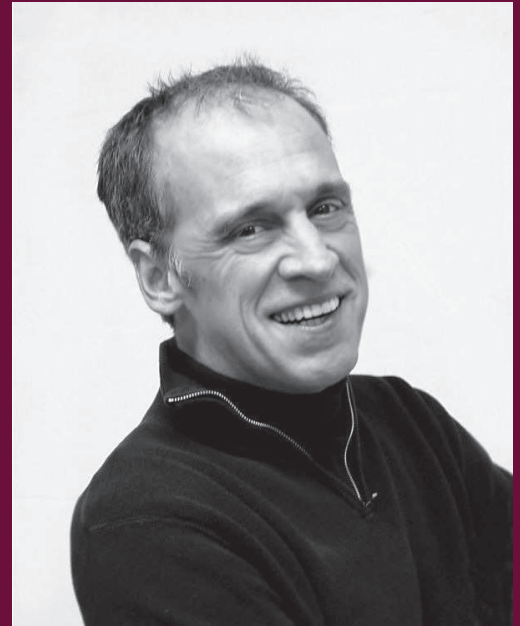


SKIP REFLECTS ON 50 YEARS OF GYPSY

by Sunny Monnig

Little Skip Fenker went to see Mary Martin in “Peter Pan” and discovered a life-shaping experience. Even as a child, he knew he wanted to be in theater. He used to act in high school shows, and at UC, where he minored in theatre. Acting interested him, but after directing his first show, he knew to which side of the theater he belonged. CMT is happy to showcase Mr. Fenker’s directing talents. He has honored the Cincinnati area with many outstanding productions. He says he’s been directing “. . . longer than I care to remember.” His most recent shows have been *110 in the Shade*, *A Grand Night For Singing*, *La Cage Aux Folles*, and *Chicago*. This coming season, he will direct *Sweeney Todd* for Footlighters, and back to CMT for *Curtains*.



Mr. Fenker elaborated on the type of actress he was searching for in the role of Rose. “I was looking for someone with a big personality and an even bigger voice. There seems to be a misconception about the role of Rose, which I think comes from the part being created by Ethel Merman and subsequently played by Angela Lansbury, Tyne Daly, Bernadette Peters, and Patti LuPone – all middle aged women. Historically, Rose is in her early twenties at the start of the show and only about forty at the end of it – much younger than any of the ladies who played her on Broadway.”

Another misconception, Mr. Fenker pointed out, is that it’s really Rose’s story rather than Louise as Gypsy Rose Lee. “This, of course, begs the question, ‘Why is the show titled GYPSY if it’s Rose’s story?’ Simple – the original producers were contractually obligated to use that as the title for the show when they purchased the stage rights to Gypsy Rose Lee’s memoirs, on which the show is based.”

When asked why he thought *Gypsy* has remained so popular over a 50-year period, Skip leaned back in his chair and looked thoughtful. “Audiences have always seemed to love backstage stories like *Gypsy*, *Funny Girl*, and *42nd Street*. And on some level, *Gypsy* is a Cinderella story – another audience favorite. Unlike a lot of other shows from the same period, *Gypsy* has aged quite well. If anything, it is more appreciated today than it was 50 years ago. Some feel the original production’s “razzle dazzle” obscured its darker themes. Times have changed, however, and so have audiences’ tastes. They are now willing to accept a more challenging, deeper, and emotionally charged production of the show. Each subsequent revival seems to have brought more maturity to the piece. I think its enduring appeal stems from its underlying theme of the need for acceptance and recognition that all of us share.”

INSIDE

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- Whatever Happened To ..
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WHATEVER HAPPENED TO

By John Beiting

Last summer (2008), Kathy and I made a trek across the country with our westernmost destination being Las Vegas. On the way we stopped to see old friends from community theater here in Cincinnati.



Our first stop put us in Le Claire, Iowa where Christina (Schnock) and Bill Myatt live. Christina started with CMT when she was cast as Aldonza in our 1996 production of *Man of La Mancha*. During the next five years, she acted, sang, danced, choreographed, directed and produced as well as served on the CMT Board of Trustees. On one of her trips to Nebraska as a member of the Educational Theater Association staff she met Bill, and the rest is history. He whisked her off to Iowa where she went to work in the education department of the Putnam Museum in Davenport, Iowa. Christina, Bill and Zach, Bill's son, soon added to their little family with the birth of Anna. This past year, they purchased the Center Stage Performing Arts Academy where Christina had been teaching dance. So now in addition to teaching, she runs the business.

A few days later found us in Sioux City, Iowa, where Cliff Towner and his wife Gina live. Cliff and Gina both worked at McNicholas High School where he was band director and she taught French. Cliff played trumpet for a number of CMT shows and both he and Gina worked stage crew for *Carousel*. Cliff is now the Director of Bands at Morningside College in Sioux City, and Gina is teaching part time. They have two children - Laura who is four, and Nathan who is one.



In Nevada, we met with Richard Oberacker, a graduate of Anderson High School and protégé of Dick Wesp. Richard is the music director for the Cirque du Soleil production at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. He got his start in high school and community theater here in Cincy. He has written a number of musicals, one of which, *Ace*, premiered at Playhouse in the Park a few years ago. Richard took us on a backstage tour of his Cirque show, "KA." It was truly an eye-opening look at just how far theater has come. From the orchestra being three flights down from the stage, to a stage which doesn't stay in one place, it was truly incredible.

If you are in contact with a former CMT performer, techie, musician, etc. who has since left the area, please let us know what they're up to.

2009-2010 SEASON REVISITS THE 1950'S

Guys and Dolls

A well loved classic, *Guys and Dolls* is an oddball romantic comedy - considered by many to be the perfect musical comedy - soars with the spirit of Broadway as it introduces us to a cast of vivid characters who have become legends in the canon: Sarah Brown, the upright but uptight "mission doll," out to reform the evildoers of Time

Square; Sky Masterson, the slick, high-rolling gambler who woos her on a bet and ends up falling in love; Adelaide, the chronically ill nightclub performer whose condition is brought on by the fact she's been engaged to the same man for fourteen years; and Nathan Detroit, her devoted fiancé, desperate as always to find a spot for his infamous floating crap game.

CMT newcomer Charlie Russell leads our Fall 2009 production of *Guys and Dolls*. Most recently, Mr. Russell directed *Pirates of Penzance* at Beechmont Players and he will direct Neil Simon's *Plaza Suite* at Mariemont Players in May 2009.



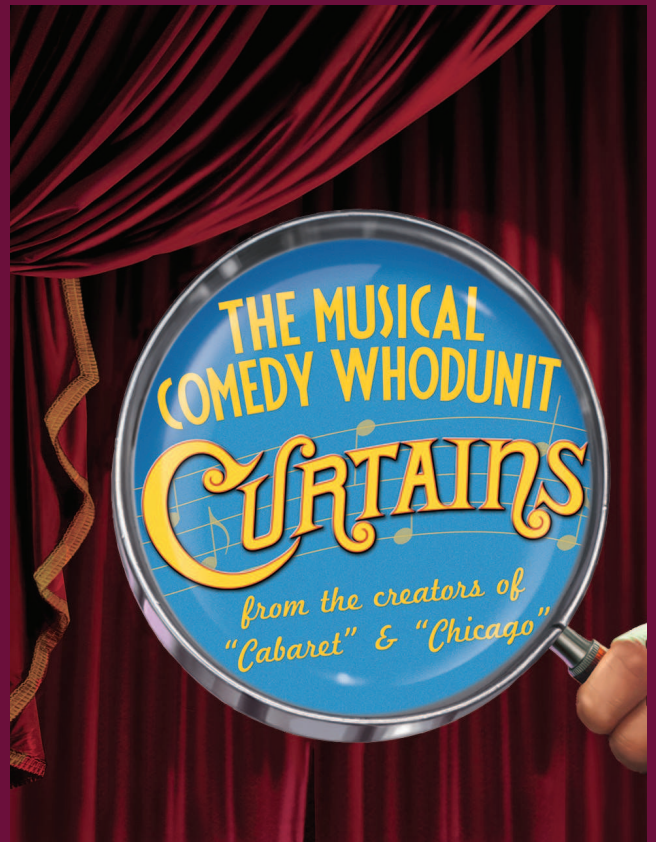
Book by JO SWERLING and ABE BURROWS Music and Lyrics by FRANK LOESSER - Based on "The Idyll of Sarah Brown" and characters by DAMON RUNYON - GUYS AND DOLLS is produced by special arrangement with Music Theatre International.

C U R T A I N S

Skip Fenker returns May 2010 to direct *Curtains*, a hilarious send-up of backstage murder mystery plots, set in 1959 Boston, Massachusetts. *Curtains* follows the fallout when Jessica Cranshaw, the supremely untalented star of *Robbin' Hood of the Old West*, is murdered during her opening night curtain call.

Can Lieutenant Frank Cioffi, who moonlights as a musical theater fan save the show, solve the case, and maybe even find love before the show reopens, without getting killed himself?

Book by RUPERT HOLMES - Music by JOHN KANDER Lyrics by FRED EBB - Original Book and Concept by PETER STONE - Additional Lyrics by JOHN KANDER and RUPERT HOLMES - CURTAINS is produced by special arrangement with Theatrical Rights Worldwide.



AN INTERVIEW WITH KENDRA STRUTHERS



By Sunny Monnig

CMT is happy to have “Maestro” Struthers as CMT’s first lady Music Director in the upcoming production of *Gypsy*. This talented musician has two degrees in music – one in Bassoon Performance and one in Instrumental Music Education from James Madison University in Virginia. This isn’t, however, the first time Ms. Struthers has taken the baton.

“I couldn’t find a band directing job out of college, so I performed in six shows in six different theaters during that year. Then I came to Cincinnati for the Arts Administration Program at UC’s CCM, and I have been a Cincinnati resident ever since.”

Ms. Struthers got her start in Cincinnati as vocal director for an East Side Players production of *Guys and Dolls*. She was originally cast as Sarah Brown, the uptight “Salvation Army mission doll,” but when she arrived at the first music rehearsal, the vocal director had dropped out. She thought that since she could certainly read music, she would give it a shot. That was the start of something great for Ms. Struthers as well as community theater in Cincinnati. She directed four other shows at East Side, conducting one as well. She had a stint with Sunset Players as vocal director for *Pippin*, music director for *The Sound of Music* at Loveland High School, and vocal director for Encore Summer Youth Theatre’s *Schoolhouse Rock Live*. She also vocal directed for *Fiddler on the Roof*, music directed for *Working, Dark of the Moon*, *Oklahoma*, and *Jesus Christ Superstar* all for Footlighters.

She is happy to be collaborating with Skip Fenker once again, having worked backstage on his production of *And the World Goes ‘Round*, and played bassoon in the orchestra for his production of *Into the Woods*, both at Footlighters. “I have now become an official part of the Skip Fenker Traveling Musical Theatre Circus. I’ll be working with him again on CMT’s *Curtains* coming up in the spring of next year.

“For me, the timing was right and *Gypsy* has a great score. To be honest, I had no idea I was CMT’s first female music director until Skip mentioned it at the first rehearsal. My only concern was what to wear if we chose to do the full dress for the orchestra – I don’t own a tuxedo!”

T I C K E T S

Ticketing for all shows is managed by the Cincinnati Arts Association (CAA), operators of the Aronoff Center for the Performing Arts. To order tickets:

- Visit the CAA Website
- Call the CAA Ticket Office at 513.621.2787
- Download, print and mail our flyer from www.cincinnati-music-theatre.org
- Visit the Aronoff Center Box Office at 650 Walnut St, Cincinnati, OH 45202