



"SERVING THE COMMUNITY SINCE 1969"

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The information below is designed to tell you four things: (1) What we, *Duck Soup Players*, have done over the past two and a half years, a rolling start if you will!; (2) What our current plans are; (3) What our future plans are; and (4) How we bring these plans to fruition, including difficulties we encounter.

APRIL - MAY - EARLY JUNE 2008

"Lucky's Lighthouse Caper" The can't-get-a-break Eastmans are on the road again. (Husband and wife Richard and Amy, her mother and little sister. A vacation gone awry starts with an unplanned stay-over at an abandoned lighthouse cottage due to Richard's careless late night driving. A suspicious, grizzled sea captain, an escaped circus-trained bear, a desperate real estate salesman and strange, unexplained happenings all make for a typical fun-filled Eastman family vacation.

So!... How did it go?... Once again, references and comparisons to the old Carol Burnett Show were made. A compliment! Sadly, the woman (Lanii Jones) who physically reminded people of Ms. Burnett retired at the end of this production due to declining health. She had been with us for 15 years! A true talent, and deeply committed to our mission, Lanii will be missed! This show was a fitting farewell for Ms. Jones with audience's howls of laughter and positive comments as bright and undiminished as ever.

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2008

"Truth, Justice and the American Way" is, as the name would indicate, an old fashion melodrama "done-up" Duck Soup style! It's all there... The villain and his stumbling sidekick in training, the intended victims of their skullduggery (a widow and her lovely daughter) and of course, the hero (with an ego as big as the sky) Pureheart Powerfull and his little shadow Polly. A comedy that had audiences sometimes cheering for the villain. This being an election year, we also gave the audiences a great laugh by poking fun at both political parties. A wonderful evening had by all with many folks asking, "How do you come up with such funny stuff time after time."

But there was trouble... After this past summer's fiasco (the damp dinner theatre), we were ready to put a fun, simple show together for our fall production... Not so! First, we lost our Maplewood rehearsal/audition space this past spring. We've been rehearsing in Bayport recently (a great spot, but not so centrally located.) We held auditions in Stillwater... Few showed up. Seems every other theatre in the Twin Cities was auditioning at the same time. More auditions were held... Fewer people showed up. Meanwhile, the clock was ticking toward opening night. Next it was on to a number of talent resources. By this time, two of our "regular" Duck Soupers had freed up their schedules to come aboard. Great! Our resources were garnering results, too. The show was

cast... The rehearsals were on!! Two weeks into rehearsals a cast member said certain performances dates wouldn't work for her. Much rescheduling was done with great difficulty including opening night. Sadly, some performances had to be canceled outright. Another week into rehearsals... The same cast member said, "It's just too much! I can't do the show." Two days later, another cast member said the same thing... And she quite too. We were able to recast the female part, but it was soon apparent she was a deeply troubled young woman. (Turns out she was bipolar.) Sadly, but to our relief, she simply didn't show up after four rehearsals. The clock was ticking toward our new opening night. The remaining cast members morale was low, keeping a happy and positive attitude was not easy. At last, one week before opening night, we were able to fill the missing parts with two very talented rock-solid people with great hearts, a belief in, and a commitment to our mission. With only a week to prepare, they rehearsed every day and had their music and lines down by the third day with the remaining time spent polishing. In the end, these two people were a treasure. Great additions to our core group!

LATE JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2009

"Truth, Justice and the American Way" continued... Considering the performances we had to cancel during our Fall run, we gathered the cast back together to fulfill those commitments with a few extra thrown in for good measure.

Also... JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2009 THREE WEEKEND FUNDRAISER -Limited Run Schedule

"Moon Over Transylvania" the last two weekends in January and the first weekend in February at Luna Rossa in Stillwater. Remember what we said about never doing a show at Luna Rossa in Stillwater again in the summer? Well, while the caves are cool, they are not damp in the winter. Effectively eliminating our major complaint about the venue, Luna Rossa has asked us back for several more weekends of fund-raising performances. Again, no rent was charged plus they fed us! While this summer was not much as far as money raised, we did see an increase in audience size by the end of the run. We need the income so we said, yes... So how did this one go?... Much better, thank you!! We cut costs including stipends. Our audiences were larger and grew! Some coming back a second time with friends in tow as they did last summer. We certainly seem to be getting a core of theatre goers who are anxious to see more of our productions and think highly of Duck Soup's main mission. Another thing shared with us by audiences was that they really enjoyed our "old fashion but timeless" humor... That they could have a great night out and not be embarrassed if they brought the kids or grandma along. One more item, because of these performances, we're getting more new calls than ever from senior residences requesting performances. (Relatives of residents told the staff about us.) Bottom line: approximately \$2,000 profit. Following the fundraiser, a limited run of performances were given in February - Early March at regular venues.

APRIL - MAY - EARLY JUNE 2009

"Moon Over Miami IV" More trouble for Herbert and Martha Needler at the "Open Palms Hotel." Like the Eastman family, our audiences have enjoyed following Mr. & Mrs. Needler's mishaps, plans gone awry and adventures over the years. Some good news even great news with this one: We picked up four wonderful cast members that were new to Duck Soup (**including J. P. Barone who is the Assistant Minnesota Attorney General**). Gee! Between this fellow and Jack Rhodes, Ramsey County Attorney Chief of Staff, we have friends in high places!! (Jack has done three shows with us and has joined our Board of Directors.) All four of the new cast members were kind, considerate, fun, worked hard as a team, treated the "old" cast members well, and believed in our mission. They were a dream to work with... Wow!!

Issues: A fifth new 12-year-old cast member didn't work out so well. She kept resisting stage directions and her mother who knew our schedule from the beginning, demanded date and time changes a week before we opened. We tried to accommodate as much as we could until at the very last moment replacing her. But the damage had

been done... In trying to placate her, we had moved our Scandia fundraiser from the second weekend in May to the fourth weekend not realizing that there were five weekends in May this year and it was Memorial Day weekend!! By the time we replaced her, it was too late, we could not move the dates back. Ticket sales bombed.

The upside was our “regular run” audiences had a great time at the show, following all the twists, turns, and switching. They had lots of fun and sang along with the music as usual! We’ll give you just one quote from a Senior at Raymie Johnson Residence – *“With all the awful news and the country in such bad condition, it’s wonderful to turn back the clock and laugh and dream a little longer after the show! God Bless you people!”*

The cast/audience interaction after the performances were terrific. Again wow!

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER - EARLY DECEMBER 2009

New adventures for Inspector Jaques Clouseau, Sr. in... *“The Purple Puma Strikes Again!!”* ... A loose take-off on the “Pink Panther” movies... Mix in a pinch of Duck Soup, add a dash of Gilbert & Sullivan music for a taste of class, and you have it! In terms of script/music, probably one of our more sophisticated productions along with “Nick Ace P.I.” All the action takes place in a seacoast mansion in England, November 1940. There’s been much skulduggery, and a murder and plenty of suspects with a motive. Enter Clouseau, Sr.... Great fun for all!

This is the show that had me wondering about human nature and commitment these days. I wondered aloud too if the Duck Soup Players could survive in this era of peoples’ crazy schedules and lack of the afore mentioned commitments or integrity. There have been several disturbingly similar scenarios in the past few years... This is a shortened version...

The first auditions yielded a decent, talented cast. Most of them were new to us. As rehearsals progressed, some cast members started to drop out... Taking ‘paying jobs’ elsewhere. A couple more decided the commitment was just too much. A general theme was that we weren’t paying enough for gas stipends.

With our schedule of performances rapidly approaching, another casting call was quickly held. The turnout was not at all satisfactory... Not enough people turned out. This left us ‘shaking the bushes’ to complete the second cast. **(It should be noted, to our surprise, that even the coveted “Lake Shore Players” has had some real difficulties casting a number of shows lately as well.)** As rehearsals picked up, it was the same old story plus a sad new twist. Lanii Jones, an old trusted Duck Souper came out of retirement to help us. She was rewarded with an accident that left her with a compound fracture of her left arm.

It was painfully obvious the production would not be ready for opening night. Cancellations were made and a search for a ‘ready-made’ show begins. Luckily an alternative production was available from Bill Cagely, another old Duck Souper who had started his own one-man show *“Barn Dance Tonight”* years ago. The format is taken from the old radio show of the same name. The foundation of the show is Old-Tyme music from the 1930’s through the early 1950’s. Bill’s delivery is warm and folksy, but it needed that Duck Soup touch. We sprinkled the show with some old commercials and fun trivia questions from the period. The winners received fun Kitchy prizes!

While “Barn Dance Tonight” was certainly different than our big, ‘full stage’ productions, the audiences had a great time. As the seniors sang along, many a wonderful memory stirred, a few tears were shed, some giggles and laughter shared. I even danced with a couple of sweet ladies each night without stepping on their toes!

FORECAST

JANUARY - FEBRUARY - MID MARCH 2010

'Three's a charm' apparently worked when it came to casting "*Purple Puma Strikes Again!*" Finally a cast that was willing to work was assembled in mid-November. Not only talented, fun and professional in attitude, they were just plain nice people to work with... **And** they all were former Duck Soup Players! Although too late for the fall run, it was ready for the late January-early February fundraiser performances and the 'regular' performances through mid-March.

The fundraiser performances consisted of three weekend shows given the last weekend of January and the first two weekends of February. The venue was Luna Rossa Restaurant in Stillwater. We will not be performing there again, ever! Sadly, the manager was 'let go' about two weeks before we opened. Without her, certainly things did not go smoothly and the new management didn't honor the original financial agreement as well as promotional strategies. As a result, while we did have some 'good houses' (60 people was a packed house), overall ticket sales sagged. Partly we believe, is the venue. Sitting in a cave with the temperature hovering around 50 degrees is a tad uncomfortable. We must find a better place to perform for these fundraising performances. We've heard the complaint enough to make us really listen... "We love your shows. We'd love to come back with friends, but we just can't take the cold in the cave... And those metal chairs! Brrr!"

So how was "The Purple Strikes Again!" received by the 'cave dwelling' audiences? We wish our video camera would have worked the time we brought it! Howls, shrieks of laughter, belly laughs... They were wild for the show. The comments we heard after each performance we've heard before, but still great to receive them again and again. "This is theater for people who hate theatre!" ... "Like watching the old Carol Burnett Show, only live! How cool!" ... "A great evening's entertainment you can bring the entire family to enjoy."

Another side effect is that we are again receiving calls from senior residences for performances. The adult children of some of the seniors had seen the show and told the staff to get a hold of the Duck Soup Players.

So there it is. Another wild year with so many elements making up the good, the bad, and the ugly! Here's to a new year without all the drama, fussing, and feuding! Don't know if my heart can take it! But I do know the seniors will be waiting for us to help make their lives just a little brighter, a little happier, and a little more fun!

APRIL - MAY 2010

"*Barn Dance Tonight*"... will finish up our year as we regroup and prepare for the upcoming season which includes three all new productions!

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2010

"*Mystery On The Nile or Are You My Mummy?*" It's 1949, the Eastman family has won a trip to Egypt. But there is danger and mystery in the air as things quickly go awry... The hotel owner is not what she pretends to be... A mummy comes alive... A family member goes missing... Thieves in the night... A greedy archeologist... Enter one Inspector Clouseau, Sr. The real mystery is that the case is solved at all! We describe the show, as The Pink Panther meets Agatha Christy! Of course, fun music included.

FEBRUARY - MARCH 2011

"*My Funny Valentine*" is a lighthearted romantic comedy. It's something a bit different for us. But audiences should have fun with this sweet, unexpected treat. Another period piece, it takes place at the 'LaPetite Restaurant' in New York during the late 1940's. A new chef has been hired. Although 'grating' at first, things start to

simmer with an employee then come to full boil. But not all is well. Another chef is 'stewing' about the situation. Does love prevail? Stay tuned.

APRIL - MAY- EARLY JUNE 2011

"Belles of the West" takes place in the 'Sage Brush Saloon' in Dodge City, Kansas, 1870. Wanting to drum up business, the owner of the establishment hatches a hare-brain scheme that will tickle audiences' funny bones. Packed with classic old west characters, music and some of the worst puns this side of the Pacos. Hold onto your ten gallon hats!

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2011

"Nick Ace P.I. in the Case of the Hollywood Ham." Nick Ace has been called in to find a second rate actor whose disappearance sheds an unwelcome light on a film studio. No lack of the usual suspects here! As always, we're back in the 1940's. Nick Ace is one of our most popular characters. Audiences have been clamoring to see more adventures of everybody's favorite American gumshoe. We think the wait was worth it!

PRODUCTION NOTES

- We are already casting for future productions... Getting a leg up.
- We will continue to produce one or two shows per year that will include children of various ages.
- We will actively pursue including senior citizens in our productions.
- We will include Duluth and Rochester in any out-state tours only on an "as-we-can" basis (depending on our cash flow.)
- This past season, 44 performances were given with approximately 5,400 in attendance.
- Of course we are very concerned about the price of gasoline due to the very nature of our mission. We will try to increase the amount of the gasoline stipend we give our actors. Because without the volunteers, we're "dead ducks." This is becoming a serious problem as many, but not all of the volunteers demand higher gas stipends.

And now... A word about those people who do give **so very generously** of their time to make our productions possible.

We have often said that our volunteer performers need "the right stuff"... A balanced blend of talent, compassion, dedication, discipline, and just plain heart. Once we sign on these folks through careful screening, that's just the beginning. **Consider this:** Each production requires approximately **45** hours per person for rehearsal, (three hours, three days a week for five weeks). The rehearsal space is donated to us, amounting to an in-kind donation of **\$2,025**. Once the performances begin, approximately **96** hours per person are needed, four hours per performance for 24 performances... (Travel time, set up, performance, break down.) Most shows have an average of eight people in them. That's a total of **768** volunteer hours needed for **one production** run. If we do three shows each season, the total rises to **2,304** hours. If we were to pay these performers a modest **\$7.00** per hour, that expense would be **\$16,121**, add in rehearsal time value, the total is **\$23,688**, not including rehearsal space. As you can see, these performers are very valuable to us.

We do hire support staff, i.e., music directors and production directors (if Pat Bettendorf isn't directing,) choreographers, costumers, technical support, etc. Although there have been numerous times (with the exception of the music director) that volunteers fill these positions as well.

Not only do these people perform, but they are also the stage crew. One hour prior to curtain time, the cast arrives and unloads the truck and trailer (regardless of weather conditions) and sets up for the performance. After the performance, the cast becomes “part of the crowd,” socializing with the residents. Finally, it’s time to disassemble and reload the sets and equipment. Imagine... All this after attending school or working all day! Night after night, week after week, it’s no wonder that we think our volunteers are so special. **THEY ARE!** Those who have been recipients of our performances or sponsors of the Duck Soup Players over the years know well the end results of our efforts, but may not have an in-depth appreciation of the work that goes into each production.

DUCK SOUP PLAYERS “OTHER WING”

Some years ago, Mr. Bettendorf had long seen a real void in the lives of those living in residences and nursing homes while touring with the Duck Soup Players... People missed their pets and in many cases, experienced very painful emptiness. In 1994, Pat brought a puppy (Katie) for the express purpose to help fill that void. After extensive training, in January 1996 Katie passed with “flying colors” a test/examination by **Therapy Dogs International**. Sadly, after eight years of therapy work, Katie passed away on August 12, 2004 from cancer.

Now “Ruby” makes the rounds at nursing homes and senior residences. These include hospice visits on an on-call basis, Ruby, a pit mix... yes... the way they truly are suppose to be, is also **Therapy Dog International certified** and insured. She also won a role in the Lakeshore Players production of “Cheaper By The Dozen” She won the hearts of the cast, crew and the sold-out audiences, many of whom bought tickets when they read one of the many newspaper articles about Ruby. In fact, two directors who saw her on stage wanted her for their productions, they didn’t work out because of timing and distance on our part.

• **On Saturday, February 3, 2007, Ruby was inducted into the Minnesota Animal Hall of Fame sponsored by the Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association... Impressive doggie!!**

• **Given an achievement award by the New York Animal Foundation.**

• **On December 29, 2007, The Minneapolis Star Tribune did a very major piece on Ruby which was picked up by the A.P. ... going nationwide! Then to Europe!!**

Lastly, Ruby was entered in the Milk-Bone Dog Biscuit Company’s 100-Year Anniversary “Spokes Dog” Contest. Out of the tens of thousands of entrants, she made the final 100! The public (nationwide) voted for a winner. The three finalists (which included Ruby!!!) were flown to Hollywood to appear on the “**Bonnie Hunt Show**” where the winner was announce. The total prize package was approximately \$145,000!!... If we won, we ear marked a \$26,000 donation to Duck Soup to help pay down their indebtedness.

The result?... Ruby placed 2nd receiving only 497 votes less than the winner! She did receive a nice digital camera, a lifetime supply of Milk-Bones, and her picture will soon grace the front of Milk-Bone boxes world-wide... But no cash! OUCH!... Sooo close. We did have fun in Hollywood being treated like movie stars. Bottom line, Ruby is back and busier than ever making a difference in people’s lives.

Please visit our website at www.ducksoupplayers.com