



"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.

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER - EARLY DECEMBER 2007

"My Old Kentucky Home" takes place on a plantation at the end of the Civil War where the widowed colonel is trying to marry off his high maintenance daughter to the right suitor. The blustery colonel, a poor returning soldier, a river boat gambler with a dance in his step and women on his mind, sassy sissy the housekeeper, the widow next door with her own designs on the colonel and his plantation, and of course that daughter all make for fun, colorful characters! Throw in period Steven Foster music rewritten enough to make it P.C., a terrific set, wonderful costumes, and it all adds up to a great show! Brought to life by a very talented and very dedicated cast.

So, how was it received? We've always given you wonderful, glowing reports with quotes from residents. While they're true, how much does it really mean coming from us? This time our report is a bit different. On Wednesday, December 12, 2007, the Minneapolis Star Tribune did an article on Ramsey County Prosecutor's Office Chief of Staff, Jack Rhodes. Mr. Rhodes believes in our mission so deeply, he agreed to do the story only if Duck Soup were included. So staff writer Pat Phiffer and a photographer attended a performance in Stillwater... They too were sold. Enjoy the article! (Enclosed.)

MARCH 2008

"Dog Park" is unleashed (out) for another short run. *"Dog Park"* is mostly a kids' cast playing various breeds of dogs... All the action takes place in a dog park (hence the title). It's another all new production that's cute and fun. Along with some life lessons, the seniors will love the kids! Plus, there's a new twist... We're again looking at a limited number of performances in schools. We'll keep you posted on this one. This was a run fun on a very limited basis, but wasn't quite up to Duck Soup standards... script wise.

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.

AUGUST 2008 (First three weekends)

Duck Soup Players Fundraiser Performances -- Luna Rossa Restaurant - Stillwater

“Nick Ace P.I.... In a Case of Fowl Play”

Production Costs

Program Printing	\$430
Ticket Printing	185
“Special Event” Insurance	240
Outside Banner	130
Flyer/Poster Printing	60
Artwork-Programs/Flyers	88
Mailing	205
Electrical Cords	58
Fans	80
Stipends	<u>945</u>
	\$2,421
INCOME: Ticket & Duck Sales	\$3,210
Production Costs	<u>-2,421</u>
<u>TOTAL PROFIT</u>	<u>\$789</u>

Bottom line... Was it worth it? Considering the tremendous amount of work for the amount we earned, and the extraordinary dampness of the venue which caused much, much more work to correct mold and rust issues afterwards, a flat **NO** is the answer. Note: During the fall show rehearsals, when we hooked up our sound system, the units sparked and smoked – ruined! Dampness caused rusting, causing a short. We were told that repairing the system would cost more than replacement... Scratch any profit from the summer show!!

However, there were some bright spots to be sure:

- The size of audiences increased toward the end of the run... due to word of mouth.
- The audiences loved the show.
- Many, many compliments on a family-friendly production.
- Lots of folks wanted to know when we would be back.
- Some people came back to see the show a second time bringing different friends along.
- It was a chance to introduce the Duck Soup Player's mission to a new group of individuals... Who knows whether this will lead to new supporters. (A few audience members made additional contributions after the show.)

Would we do it again? ... Depends... But most certainly never again in the summer. (I think we all had mold growing on us by the end.) The restaurant certainly wants us back. We'll have to think long and hard about that.

One point of frustration was publicity. The Stillwater Gazette did a great job for us, but the St. Paul Pioneer Press and Minneapolis Star Tribune newspapers wouldn't even include us in their events calendar!

We'll keep you posted. In the meantime, it's back to our mission!

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

“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.

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!

FORECAST

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!

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2010

“Jons The Juggler” is a one man show with wonderful appeal for both seniors and the kids. His style as a fumbling Norwegian immigrant with Scandinavian humor, magic and juggling, certainly endear him to the audience. But just as important is his heart. Jons’ one-on-one with the seniors and kids before and after the shows, making magic balloon animals or folded paper toys for the kids, are all part of what makes “Jons” a true Duck Souper.

ALSO, LATE JANUARY - EARLY FEBRUARY 2010

We will be performing **“Purple Puma”** for a three weekend fundraiser at Luna Rossa Italian Restaurant in Stillwater... No reason to expect anything but a success for this one!!

APRIL - MAY 2010

We're currently working on an all new production, (working title: "*Fool's Gold*"). Fun show! We'll keep you up to date on this one...

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2010

"*Mystery On The Nile or Are You My Mummy?*"... Inspector Clouseau, Sr. is on the trail of a missing person, this time in Cairo, Egypt... But, there's mystery, danger, along with comedy in the air.

PRODUCTION NOTES

- 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, 53 performances were given with approximately 7,900 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."

And now... A word about those people who 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