

If you want to help the American theatre,
don't be an actress, be an audience.

Tallulah Bankhead

Newsletter of the Heritage Hunt Little Theater



Play Time

March 2005

Trouble at the Tropicabana

by John Gatt, Director

From the Prez

I hope you all have your tickets for *Trouble At The Tropicabana* by now, or plan to get them by the end this week.

If you do not have them yet, call Denny Cumber. If there are any tickets left call your friends, and family, and neighbors.

Incidentally they make a nice gift.

One of the ways to support our group is to be sure the house is full. It's good for the actors, it helps our budget, and our reason having a Theater Group.

As you know we give our profits back to The Heritage Hunt Community.

As a result of our last contribution to the wonderful Sound & Light Volunteers, this production will have the best sound & lighting in our short history.

Light & sound controls will be from the back of the ballroom instead of backstage....a huge improvement. Everyone on stage, & everyone attending benefits, especially the audience.

So your contribution will be to fill up the theater for four evenings.

Remember ... "There's No Business Like Show Business."

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Your President,
Murray Schooner

The cast is doing an excellent job of learning their lines for this completely different type of production, but there are a few new twists that create some concern. The first hurdle is getting into characters that the audience are quite familiar with such as Ricky, Lucy, Ethel, and Fred. Most people have a strong idea of what they should look and sound like. And for Ricky (Jim Campbell) that means the lyrical Cuban accent where he drops certain vowels and pronounces words like *dunt*, *everythin*, *nothin*, and the ever popular, *splaining to do*. Our Lucy (Tina Mullins) has to capture all the facial and voice changes that Lucille Ball was known for. The same goes for Ethel (Joan Pimentel) and Fred (Rick Sullivan).

The other major change for this interactive theater is that since it's not traditionally done on a stage but rather in a restaurant setting, the curtain doesn't close between acts as it has in our past productions. Additionally the scenes are not balanced time-wise—with the third scene being twice as long as the first two combined. The entire cast shows up in that scene and the action simply shifts from one side of the stage to the other. That means half of

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Photo by Sandy Mills

The TATT actors hard at work rehearsing.

*Left to Right: Midge Teahan, Joan Pimentel, Tina Mullins,
Nanette Ross & Rick Sullivan*

Stayin' In School

by Helen Esposito

Sandy Mills and I are half-way through our acting class at NOVA. At the very first class the professor reviewed the syllabus. Attendance/participation will count for 30% of our grade. As of this writing, of the 26 registered students, Sandy and I and only three other students are trying for perfect attendance.

Having been in a few productions has helped me to get more out of the class. With blocking, for instance, I could never keep "upstage" straight from "downstage." In class we learned that the reason the back of the stage is called "upstage" is because stages used to be slanted upwards near the back wall so the audience could see the actors. Now that I have that mental image, it will help me remember blocking instructions.

We spent the first several classes doing pantomime improvisations on who, what, trust (Sandy and I both told the professor we would not let ourselves drop into another student's arms), observation, object and where. We then moved on to speaking improvisations on environment, giving and taking focus, calling out and stage whispers. Most times, the professor had us count off to define working groups. I was relieved with this at first because I didn't want to feel like the proverbial wallflower. I felt that because of the age differences none of the other students would pick me. One time, a student was speaking with another about that "70's show." He then very politely looked at me and explained that it was a TV show. I told him not only was I aware of the show, but I actually lived the 70's. That didn't get the chuckle I expected.

But now I feel more comfortable with the age differences. I also realize that the young people in our class are not any different from us baby boomers. They are still partying hard—rolling joints, playing drinking games, etc. I did, however, learn a new game from one of our exercises—beer pong. I can teach it to you all at our summer social.

We are now beginning the real work and putting into action all that we learned from the improvisation exercises. We are now in the process of working on a monologue and character analysis. Our final assignment will be scene work presentations. Guests are invited to these. So if you're curious, mark your calendars for April 25 and 27.

Board of Directors

President	Murray Schooner
Vice President	Sandy Mills
Secretary	Joan DeBell
Treasurer	Dave Milbradt
Activity/Program Chair	Joyce Mancini
Communications Chair	Grace Baier
At-Large	Helen Esposito



Welcome, New Members

A warm welcome to our new members: Claire Behrmann, Linda Medlock, Joan Pimentel, Emily Russell and Dot Schuetze.

Our Newsletter Needs Your Input

by Bets Knepley, Editor

To make our newsletters interesting, we need **you, our members**, to participate by contributing an occasional item about your little theater experiences, either with HHLT or other organizations.

You have read (over the past few months) about some of the experiences our members have had. Don't you find that news worthy?

I will be asking each and every one of you to contribute, so be prepared! Or better yet, send me an article today!

Your Dues Are Due

by Bets Knepley

Your annual membership dues were due in January. If you haven't already paid, please contact our treasurer, Dave Milbradt. Checks and cash are accepted. Please make out your check to Heritage Hunt Little Theater.

The initial fee to join HHLT is \$25 per person. Thereafter the annual dues are \$10. These fees are not prorated.

It is HHLT's policy, that in order to participate in any of our productions, you must be current in your dues.

Let's Try Again

by Joyce Mancini

The weather outside was frightful and so our birthday party was postponed until March 24th. We'll entertain you, give you some snacks and just have a general good ole' time.

Won't you join us? The time is right after our General Meeting at 8pm. The place - the card room. The participants — I hope we see all members of the Little Theater group!

Two Play Reviews

by Sandy Mills, Vice President

These two plays were selected by the play committee as suitable for our group to perform. What do you think?

Title: *Forty-Five Minutes from Broadway*

Book by: Schubert Fendrich

Music & Lyrics by: George M. Cohan

Cast: 5M, 9F, optional chorus, extras

Set/Time: Simple interior/About 1 hour

Here's a story with the celebrated show tunes of George M. Cohan, including "Give My Regards to Broadway" and "You're a Grand Old Flag." Dick Foster's Broadway show is opening, but he's having serious problems. Stubborn leading ladies and minimal working capital are just a few of his headaches. An aspiring young actress walks on the stage and could be the one to save the show, if only they had the money to put it on. To complicate matters, "Legs" Ruby enters. He's on the run from the mob and brings with him a side-splitting array of characters. Just as all appears lost, an "angel" arises with the financial backing. Filled with appealing character roles, this show is bound to be a smash hit.

Title: *If Today Is the First Day of the Rest of My Life, I'm In Real Trouble*

Author: James L. Seay

Cast: 12-13M, 18 W

If you are looking for a play for a large cast, this might fit the bill. This is a comedy that takes place in a deserted 1890's saloon of a ghost town, with a cast of characters including a pack of photography students, a director and cast of a movie, mobsters, an ancient Sourdough, a couple of Federal agents, a female sheriff and her 2 female deputies, a psychiatrist with an accent ala Swartzenegger, a couple of attendants from the funny farm, and a corpse. These people mill about and disappear through a "secret" revolving door. There is hidden treasure, romance, menace, and many memorable characters. Tricky parts include a ratty moosehead and the revolving door. Fast paced action and comedic timing are required, as entrances and exits are abundant as these groups move and change.



Photo by Sandy Mills

Director Gatt hard at work

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the cast is sitting at a table in the night club not doing anything while the other half is doing their thing on the opposite side of the stage. Again no curtain openings or closing, just one long continuous back and forth. The concern is: *Will the audience be able to focus on half of the stage while ignoring the other half?*

Another noticeable difference in this production is

that in the night club scene, there is plenty of dialogue delivered sitting in chairs rather than standing up and moving around. Again a major change from prior shows where the action really meant moving around. This setting places a premium on voice and facial delivery techniques from the cast.

This is our first attempt at a murder mystery that includes interaction with the audience. Our dancers will pick out people to Mambo with and then lead a Conga line through the ballroom. Making sure there is room for this action requires good spacing between the tables. Finally the audience has to vote for who committed the murder so there is a need for ballots at each table. Then they must be collected and read before the prizes can be given out.

So there you have it. An entire set of production issues to make this play happen. But, with a cast and crew that have devoted themselves to "Trouble" things will come together and everyone who sees it will be pleased with the end result.

Readers Theater Update

by Bets Knepley

The Readers Theater held its first meeting on Saturday, March 5 in the Craft Room at 10:30am. Fourteen members attended. It was decided that we would meet twice a month on the first and third Saturday at 10am in the Craftroom. Members may join anytime. To participate in our upcoming session on Saturday, March 19, please call me at 1360 or email me at bjknepley@comcast.net so that I can have material ready for you (monologues, skits, etc).

Our Readers Theater will be much like doing a radio show, at least at first. All types of writing will be explored so as to give participants a varied experience.

Please come and try it out.

You'll have fun, meet some wonderful people as well as learn something about the theater!





The Spotlight Is On

by Pat Dews

Pat Dews was born and raised in Arlington, Virginia and has lived all over Northern Virginia. She and her husband, Harry, along with their two cats, moved to Heritage Hunt a little over two years ago.

Pat began working for the Department of the Navy right after graduating from Wakefield High School and worked for the government for over 32 years before retiring on an early-out. She continued her education going to school while working, and earned a Masters of Public Administration from American University. Working at various government agencies, Pat's last position was Deputy Controller of the Public Buildings Service of the General Services Administration. She received a number of awards for her accomplishments.

Pat met her husband at the Navy Department when he was a Commander in the Navy. They have been married for over 22 years. She has two children from her first marriage and two grandchildren, all of whom reside in Florida. Harry has two children and three grandchildren.

Pat has been sewing since she was a child. Under the name, "Urban Cowgirl," she made country western clothing and accessories for over 5 years. She discovered quilting after retiring and decided she'd never make clothes again. In addition to making quilts, she makes "wearable art" and has won prizes for her whimsical jackets. She belongs to Quilters Unlimited of Northern Virginia and the Heritage Hunt quilters. Most of her free time is spent on quilting related activities as she belongs to two quilt guild chapters, two quilting bees, travels to quilt shows, goes on quilt retreats, and makes fabric buying trips to Lancaster, PA and any quilt store she finds.

Pat was a volunteer at INOVA Fair Oaks hospital and served on the Auxiliary board of directors until a year ago. She uses her stash of fabric to make teddy bears for Fair Oaks Hospital, tote bags and pillows for cancer patients, children's clothes for a Christian ministry serving Appalachia, and quilts for disadvantaged children.

Pat and Harry became interested in the Little Theater when casting was underway for *Westward Whoa*. They spent a number of years in various country western dance performance groups and consequently love anything related to the West. They decided not to try out when they realized how much of a time commitment was required. Pat came to a meeting to see what it was all about, and said that she could help out with costumes. She made a couple of costumes for that production. She was one of the dancers in *Charleston*, coordinated all the costumes and made 17 costumes for the dancers and the singers. Pat recently joined the Readers' Theater group.



Photo by Ed Knepley

Pat Dews

Announcing Heritage Hunt's First Annual Variety Show August 27 Search is on for Singers, Dancers, Musicians, Comics, Etc.

by Ellie Rewald

If you've got a song in your heart, like to strum the strings, tap your toes, or have a knack for keeping a few balls in the air, you may be just right for the upcoming first Annual Heritage Hunt Variety Show. Show coordinators, Lynn Levvis and Ellie Rewald, are well aware of the tremendous array of talent in our community and are looking forward to showcasing it on Saturday, August 27.

And variety is the pivotal word. They are actively seeking any form of entertainment including, but not limited to, singing, dancing, lip-synching, juggling, comedy skit, humorous monologue, etc. If you think it's entertaining, they'd like to know about it.

Interested? Then, please pay close attention to the following information: **Show of Interest Meeting**—Thursday, May 19 @ 8pm (Boardroom); **Initial Try-Outs**—Thursday, June 9 @ 7pm (Boardroom); **Show Acts Selection**—Thursday, July 14 @ 7pm (Craft Room); **Dress Rehearsals**—Thursday, August 25 @ 7pm and Friday, August 26 @ 7pm (both in the Ballroom).