

MAY 2013

The  
Newsletter  
of the  
Heritage Hunt  
Little Theater



# Play Time

Come play with us!



## —Calendar—

### May General Meeting

Thursday, May 16—7pm  
Craft Room

Scripts for the Fall play will be  
available at the meeting.

### June General Meeting

Thursday, June 20—7pm  
Craft Room

There will be a read-thru of  
*Ancestral Voices*

### July Pot Luck

July 18 at Marsh Mansion



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## From the Co-Directors

by

Walt Meyer & Betty Hitchcock

As you all know, this was our first venture into the world of directing a play. We survived and, fortunately, so did the cast and crew! It was a tremendous learning experience, but more than that it was a team effort. Everyone did his and her part to make *Murder at the Orient Express* a success.

We couldn't be happier with the results. The feedback from the community was overwhelmingly favorable. As we sat watching the play, on the evenings of May 1-3, we found new things to enjoy. We enjoyed the play as much as the audiences, and we had substantial audiences.

Opening night drew 160 people. On Thursday, 210 residents and guests packed the ballroom. Friday saw 130 enjoy the dinner theater. It was a great run.

Thanks to the 15 cast members for handling this complex script and the difficult movements on a very crowded stage. We thank Jim Burwell who stepped in for Jack Merelman, when Jack had surgery. Jim agreed to do the role because he thought so much of Jack.

Thanks, also, to the 22 members of the crew for all their behind the scenes magic, before during, and after the performances. A special thanks goes to our producer, Kathryn Schmiel, for taking care of the myriad of details, enabling us to focus on the play without ever having to worry. Kudos to everyone.

One last "thank you" goes to all the members of the club who attended the performances and brought friends and neighbors. We are so proud to be part of this organization.

Prior to the start of the performance, on Friday, May 3, it was announced that the cast dedicated the performance to Jack Merelman. It was a fitting tribute to Jack, who was originally cast in the role of Internal Revenue Service agent Lester Peapicker.

Curtain down!



## Local Little Theaters

by Bets Knepley

The 2012-13 season for our local little theaters is ending. Some have even announced their next season! And, if you are a theater buff, you might find these early bird announcements exciting.

The Elden Street Players are winding down with *Red* (June) and *Caroline, or Change* (August). Thereafter, they will be known as the NextStop Theatre Company, which is a big leap from volunteer-based organization to a professional, regional theatre. NextStop will start its first season with *The 39 Steps* (Sept 26-Oct 20). If you haven't already seen this wildly funny and uniquely staged play, please do. I guarantee that you'll enjoy it.

*The 39 Steps* will be followed by two Christmas plays (*Jacob Marley's Christmas Carol* (Dec 3-29) and *The Twelve Dates of Christmas* (Dec 4-29). Both will be DC area premieres.

In January, *Richard III* will be produced with Richard re-imagined, not as a deformed monster, but rather as a deaf man driven to malevolence in an unsympathetic hearing world.

Their last production, *Into the Woods*, with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim will run in May.

My favorite local little theater, Winchester, announced five interesting plays.

Wayside Theatre (which has been in deep financial trouble, but now seems to be okay, thanks to a lot of action from their Board) has announced three musicals, two comedies and a thriller.

For their next season, Fauquier Community Theatre will produce *Fiddler on the Roof*, *White Christmas*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Smoke on the Mountain*, *Black Coffee* and *Little Women*.

WOW! Stay tuned for more about these theaters and the many others in our area. ▲

## Play Reviews

by Bets Knepley

Why do I go to plays? To be entertained? To learn about new things? To experience (vicariously) various situations that I would never encounter? Or perhaps, it's just that I love the 'live' dramatic feeling that movies don't offer.

Since I last wrote a review, I have seen three productions in our local area little theaters.

In March, I saw Winchester Little Theatre's production of mystery, *The Gazebo* by Alec Coppel. It was described as a clever comedy with a Hitchcock twist. While it was mildly amusing, I felt it was somewhat dated. Winchester had also produced two other similar plays at the beginning of their season. However, I look forward to their last play of the season, *You Know I Can't Hear You When the Water's Running* (for mature audiences).

Wayside Theatre's production of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* was quite entertaining. I had seen the Reston Players production a year or so ago, and had really enjoyed it. So I was looking forward to seeing Wayside's version. It's a musical with quirky spelling bee participants and audience participation.

Wayside did a great job, but I preferred Reston's. The quality of singing was wonderful at both. All the characters were defined well—for example, one spelling bee participant had a 'magic foot' with which he wrote out his words before spelling them for the judges. The audience participants for both were well chosen and given great direction. For the first time (in all the hundreds of plays I've attended), I had the dubious honor of being the 'love interest' of one of the spelling bee participants. I didn't know this—until the spotlight was shone on me! I was paid for my performance (turning red as a beet)—got a candy bar. If this play comes around again, I encourage you to see it.

The third play, *33 Variations* by Moises Kaufman, produced by Reston Players, really blew me away. It is a heart-wrenching play.

In my opinion, Reston always produces great plays, using their stage capabilities in fantastic ways. *33 Variations* is a unique play that simultaneously examines the creative process behind Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* and the journey of a musicologist, who is determined to discover why Beethoven was compelled to write thirty-three distinct variations on a simple theme by a nobody music publisher. The progression of the musicologist's ALS and her relationship with her daughter are also themes, as is Beethoven's growing deafness. ▲

## The Prez Sez...

### Business as (Un)usual

I'm sure that several people, especially our new members, were getting whiplash at the pace at which the last few meetings were held, in order to allow the cast of *Murder* to rehearse. Well, we now can take a deep breath, have a more leisurely meeting, and a social time, with refreshments, afterwards. Hope to see you there.

### Curtain Call

All members of the cast and crew deserve to take a great big bow for making *Murder at the Orient Express* a resounding success. The audiences loved it and were surprised to learn that Seymour Twitt wasn't really dead, but left asking, "What happened to Seymour after the curtain came down?"

### Curtain Going Up

The Fall play, *Ancestral Voices*, is already in the planning stages. Director Gene Schmiel, will have scripts available at the June 20 meeting. Auditions will take place in July. The show dates are Tuesday, October 15 through Thursday, October 17.

### In Between Shows – The Hospital Benefit

On Friday and Saturday, M.J. Brickach held auditions for roles in the skits HHLT will be doing for the hospital benefit, on June 30. It was great to see Lynne Block, along with her husband Allen, at the auditions. On October 16, we learned that Lynne was on life support after suffering a series of strokes. A lot of prayers were answered.

### Picnic: Getting "Ant"sy?

Art Moscatello is working on our July picnic. Preliminary plans eating, drinking, playing games, and carousing. More at the meeting.

### Knock, Knock, Who's There?

It's probably Board Member-at-Large Tom Taggart with a "friendly" reminder that you haven't paid your dues. Avoid the conscience rattling, by getting your \$10 payment to Mary Glascock at the May meeting or send it to 13405 Brogue Court.

### State of the Treasury

The board has had preliminary discussions on how to use some of the funds in the treasury for the benefit of club and the community. These discussions are still ongoing.

### Goodbye, Old Friend

On a personal note, I have to thank Jack Merelman for being one of the three people who, at the St. Patrick's Day dinner in 2010, put on a full court press to convince me to join the HHLT. It was great knowing you. We will all miss you. ▲

Walt

## 2013 HHLT BOD

### President

**Walt Meyer (2011-13)**

### Vice President

**Kathryn Schmiel (2011-13)**

### Secretary

**Bill Harrison (2013-15)**

### Treasurer

**Mary Glascock (2011-13)**

### Activities

**Art Moscatello (2011-13)**

### Membership

**Joan Patton (2013-15)**

### Member-at-Large

**Tom Taggart (2013-15)**



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<http://www.hhlittletheater.wordpress.com/>

## General Meeting Minutes—April 13, 2013

Meeting called to order by President Walt Meyer at 7pm. All Board members were present except Activities Chairperson Art Moscatello. There were a total of 31 HHLTers in attendance.

Secretary Bill Harrison report: Minutes from March approved.

Treasurer Mary Glascock reported a balance as of April 25, 2013 of \$14,965.59.

VP Kathryn Schmiel reported that the play is going well.

Helen Esposito reported the following ticket sales to date: Wednesday—122; Thursday—155 and Friday—119.

Speaking for Art, Walt indicated that there are plans for a July picnic, possibly at Marsh Mansion or Joan Patton's house.

Walt also announced that M.J. Brickach has volunteered to be the hospital benefit coordinator.

M.J. stated that we could use the current Board picture of the Board for the hospital benefit poster. She also said that she is looking for volunteers to do a 20 minute skit for the benefit.

Membership Chair Joan Patton had no new members to report.

Tom Taggart, Member-at-Large, had nothing to report.

Walt announced that Gene Schmiel's proposal to direct the October production was approved by the Board. Gene said the play will be *Ancestral Voices* by A.R. Gurney, the author of *Love Letters*; a previous HHLT readers theater production. It follows a family in Buffalo, NY from 1935-1960. The cast will be four men and three women and will also be in the reader theater format.

The complete April general meeting minutes can be read on the HHLT website at <http://www.hhlittletheater.wordpress.com/> ▲



## Cast of Murder at the Orient Express





## In Memory

Jack Merelman, our neighbor and HHLT member, passed away on Saturday, May 4, 2013. Gentleman Jack (as many of us called him) was a very special person who always had a kind word to say. He was also a great listener. Despite his visual impairment and other medical issues, he remained active and involved in our group.

Jack started out playing the piano before our plays. He then grew interested in acting. His first role was as Juror 2 in *The Twelve Angry Men*. There was no stopping him after that--as he appeared in six more HHLT productions.

Jack also served on our Board of Directors from 2009-2010, first as the member-at-large and then as the activity chair.

Jack will truly be missed by all. ▲



## Curtain Calls

A curtain call is a series of bows and applause usually held at the end of a live performance. This allows the audience to give recognition to the performers for their work. Curtain calls can sometimes become encores, where extra material is performed at the request of the audience.

In theater, curtain calls are usually carefully choreographed as part of the rehearsal process. Generally for large shows, these calls are done in order of role size. Ensemble members, dancers and chorus actors will bow first, featured roles will follow, and the stars of the show will bow last. Usually the call is concluded by a company-wide bow, often including recognition to the orchestra or crew. In traditional staging, after the company bows, the stage curtain will be lowered and raised again if

applause continues. Frequently, in musical theater, the curtain call will feature an extra verse of a song from the show.

Although the general rule of bows suggests that shorter is better, amateur theater will often feature extended curtain calls on the final night of performance. These longer bows may include speeches and individual thank-yous. The director or producers of the event are often invited onstage to share in the final curtain call, and sometimes presented with gifts from the cast.

Musical performances generally feature bows by the performers and conductors. If an audience is particularly responsive, the musicians may choose to perform an encore number or set. Encore pieces are generally either a favorite work of the performer, a cover of another artist's work, or an experimental and sometimes unfinished work. An encore is the artist's gift to the audience, to thank them for their applause and support.

The curtain call in live performance is an expression of mutual gratitude between the artist and the audience. Some performers claim to experience "curtain call highs," where the excitement of the performance being well received gives them a boost of energy. Although some artists claim to live for applause, the bows are truly a chance for the performer to thank the audience for participating and supporting them. In return, the audience has an opportunity to express their enjoyment for the work the performers have put in. ▲