

Backstage at the Barn

Scene One

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Backstage at the Barn is an electronic newsletter of information, events, and tidbits related to The Barn Theater.

If you know of others who would like to receive this newsletter, invite them to contact the editor at ciderhouse@ocsnet.net. Feel free to forward this newsletter.

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1. Dear Edwina Jr. Opens Friday, October 27

Take my advice----Be sure to see *Dear Edwina Jr.* You won't regret it. Director Michelin White Hammer brings another cast of talented young people to the Barn stage, including Danielle Hanks in the title role. You may remember Danielle as the Master Toymaker in last

season's production of *Babes in Toyland*. An exceptional young actor, Danielle exhibits a stage presence beyond her years. She is supported by a cast of 38 for an evening of music and laughter that you will not soon forget. Friday and Saturday performances begin at 7:30 PM on October 27, 28, and November 3, 4, 10, and 11. Sunday performances are at 2:15 on October 29, and November 5 and 12. For reservations, call Steve Ross at 310-7046.

2. Tulare County Community Theater Coalition

Barn Theater Board member Bob Merzoian will chair a committee to investigate the possibility of forming a coalition of community theaters in Tulare County. The Barn is not alone in its effort to bring live theater opportunities to its community. Similar theaters exist in Lindsay, Visalia, and Tulare. Merzoian and his fellow Board members believe a coalition of theaters can solve common problems, share productions, develop acting and technical workshops, and provide moral support. Stay tuned for further developments.

3. 2007-08 Season Schedule Taking Shape

The play-reading committee, chaired by Ian Hammer, will be finalizing soon the play selections for next season. Sixteen potential directors were asked to submit plays, and a number of ideas are being considered. There is a strong possibility that lobby productions will be a part of the schedule. Ian tells me that if he gave me any details, he'd have to kill me.

4. Buzzards Come Home to Roost

Have you ever noticed the flock of at least 100 buzzards that roost in the tops of the eucalyptus trees south of the Barn parking lot? They return from a day of looking for carrion just before dusk this time of year. Board member Ralph Bourne noticed, and that led to the creation of the First Annual Barn Buzzardfest held October 14th. Food and music, along with a chance to see the buzzards come in for a landing lured the paying customers. Hay bales made stadium seating, and Patty Torrey and bluegrass bands entertained the crowd. Ralph and the volunteers who helped him deserve congratulations for organizing an inaugural event.

5. Hosscars 2007 to Present Excerpts from Season

Though several months away, planning for next summer's Hosscars Awards Ceremony has already begun. Plans include the presentation of excerpts from the season's productions. The Barn is determined to make this season's Hosscars better than ever.

6. Steel Magnolias: A Box Office Success

Peter Grant's production of *Steel Magnolias* was a hit not only at the box office, where excellent crowds filled the theater and brought in a profit for the Barn of over \$3000, but also as an artistic success. Rave reviews judged *SM* as an outstanding production. Additionally, the play attracted cast members who were new to the Barn. Hats off to Peter and his cast and crew.

7. Production Sponsorships Still Available

The Barn's first two plays of the current season have been greatly assisted by generous corporate sponsors. *Steel Magnolias* by Porterville Women's Medical Associates and *Dear Edwina Jr.* by Premier Pathology Laboratories. Sponsorships come with numerous opportunities for corporate exposure and several perks. Call committee chair Debra Hanks at 781-5174.

8. Fundraisers Help the Barn

Two recent fundraisers for the Barn were very successful. A yard sale organized by Michelin White Hammer, Debra Hanks, and Leslie Woudstra garnered over \$730 to help pay expenses of *Dear Edwina Jr.*, and a rock band concert organized by Ian Hammer with help from Bert Martinez and Richard Boyd and his kids earned nearly \$500 to buy wireless stage microphones. Ian says there are plans in the works for another concert near Thanksgiving. The Barn and its patrons owe a sincere debt of gratitude to the volunteers who make these fundraisers possible.

9. What Community Theater Means to Me by Peter Grant

Every organization these days, be it in the commercial or voluntary sector, has a mission statement of some sort. A declaration of what said organization is all about. We at the Barn have been talking about that as well, and I expect that at some time in the near future, we will come up with a paragraph or two that we can all agree and live with. In the meantime, I would like to throw my hat in the ring by talking

about what Community Theater means to me, in fact.

First of all, what is Community Theater? Well, here in the USA, it usually means theater produced and performed by volunteers in order to entertain people in the local community. No one gets paid at the Barn. We rehearse, act, build sets, raise funds, sew costumes, present our shows to the public and do all the other things required to keep our theater viable and functioning because we love it. Putting on a show is hard work, giving up long hours, often in the evening after we have put in a full day at the office or school or wherever. We put effort in, but there are rewards to be had. The theater can be a haven from the rest of our lives. Something we choose to do for no other reason than it is fun. It allows us to live in another world for a while. A world where the key is the suspension of disbelief. Anything can and will happen on and off stage. It is a magical world, or it can be. Children and adults alike can enter this world and do things that are denied them in other areas of their life. It can be an educational experience, but the main thing is for it to be fun. A lesson I learned the hard way recently was that if you allow your time in the theater to be stressful and don't allow yourself to enjoy the time spent then there is really no point to it at all. It is important that everyone involved in our theater should be allowed the chance to enjoy the experience.

A theater such as ours can be at the hub of the community if we allow it to be. There is scope to include all kinds of activities, such as festivals. Concerts and the like, but our main purpose must always be to produce plays for the local community to be able to come and enjoy. There is a limited amount of professional theater in Bakersfield, but nothing

nearer than that. If you want to see live theater in Tulare County, then it has to be Community Theater or nothing. I actually see us as standard bearers for live theatrical performance. The West End in London and Broadway in New York do thrive, but with so many other forms of entertainment vying for the right to occupy you during your downtime, the very concept of live theater is under threat right now. Community theater companies have a tremendous responsibility to keep the flame of live theater burning for future generations. Believe me, we would miss it if it were gone!

As for the 'community' part, I want to see as many sections of the community involved as possible in our theater. Someone recently commented that such a lofty ideal was all very well, but how do we achieve this? Well, there are no easy answers, it takes hard work and most of all, the will to achieve it, but it is possible. I recently directed *Steel Magnolias* here at the Barn. We had our share of problems, every production at every level always does, but on the final weekend, we had great houses, there was a real buzz about the place. It was exciting just being in the lobby before the performance, almost tasting the expectations of the audience. The performers on stage felt it too, and did their thing on stage to prolonged laughter and applause. The excitement we felt then was priceless, and I want as many people as possible to feel that too. If that means changing our perspectives on how we present ourselves to the public a little, then so be it. This is theater, where ANYTHING is possible. They talk of sports stadiums being theaters of dreams, but the only real theater of dreams is the theater proper. Our theater. Embrace it, get involved, or it could just disappear forever.

