Cross Upstage Vol. 3 (newsletter)

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It's been another wonderful year of Harding Theatre.

We hope you've had as exciting and fun of a year as we have here at Harding. From the giant stage in the Benson to the intimate performance space of the Ulrey, we've been producing entertaining and fun productions and student projects. We hope you enjoy what we've been up to.

Page 2: And Now for Something Completely Different  
Page 2: What Are You Doing?  
Page 3: Christmas in June  
Page 4: The Sun Will Come out for Homecoming  
Page 5: New Class Offered  
Page 6: Student Directors  
Page 7: Pipers in Scotland  
Page 8: 100 People/100 Dollars/100 Days

Help us spread the word.

If you know of anyone who was involved with any theatre activities while they were at Harding, please forward this newsletter to them so they can keep up with what we are doing. We are proud of our students and our productions and we want to share our activities with as many friends and alumni as possible.
Spring Sing 2011 "Welcome Home" brought more alumni back to Harding than ever before. Audiences were welcomed by a two-story house complete with minivans, hatchbacks, Jeeps and motorcycles throughout the production. More than 1,000 participants took place in the club competition this year. For the first time in Spring Sing history, two clubs tied for the Ryan Sweepstakes Award, and as a result two charities each received checks for the full $2,000 prize.

The theme for Spring Sing 2012 is “Slightly Askew.” Askew literally means “not in a straight or level position; tilted or canted off center.” Figuratively, askew describes anything that is out of the normal, a different and sometimes warped point of view, or things that are not in the mainstream. Comedy is usually slightly askew. Parody certainly is. Off-beat and unusual music is askew - Indie as opposed to mainstream. Little known or unusual points of view are believed to be askew, which means that Christianity is slightly askew to the rest of the world. College is askew compared to the rest of our life experiences. Spring Sing is slightly askew to almost everything else. So tilt your head to the right and come join us for some fun in April 2012.

For dates and more details you can check http://www.harding.edu/springsing.

What Are You Doing?

We want to hear from you. If you were involved with the theatre department as a student at Harding, then we want to know what you are up to. Are you working in the theatre industry? Are you involved in community theatre? Are you using theatre in ministry? Are you teaching theatre? Or perhaps you work in a completely unrelated field, but you find yourself using skills you gained from your involvement with Harding Theatre. We want to hear from you. Send your information to bjones9@harding.edu. Let us know what you are up to, and perhaps we’ll share your activities in future newsletters.
The 29th Season of Searcy Summer Dinner Theatre promises to be unique as we celebrate Christmas in June and July with our theme of "Tis the Season to be Jolly." Our three shows this year bring the joy and celebration of the winter holiday season to the blistering heat of summer. There may not be snow on the ground, but you are guaranteed to forget what month it really is during our productions.

"Every Christmas Story Ever Told (And Then Some)"
By Michael Carleton, James Fitzgerald, and John K. Alvarez
June 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18

Instead of performing Charles Dickens beloved holiday classic for the umpteenth time, three actors decide to perform every Christmas story ever told – plus seasonal icons, holiday traditions, pop culture, and every carol ever sung. It is a silly, madcap romp through the happiest holiday season!

"Christmas Belles"
By Jessie Jones, Nicholas Hope, and Jamie Wooten
June 30, July 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9

The Futrelle sisters (Frankie, Honey Raye, and Twink) are back! This time they are trying to pull off the perfect Christmas program. Things get Southern-fried crazy with squabbling sisters, family secrets, a surly Santa, a vengeful sheep, and a reluctant Elvis impersonator. There is no "Silent Night" in Fayro, Texas.

"Forever Plaid: Plaid Tidings"
Book by Stuart Ross
July 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30

"Plaid Tidings" is a musical that is truly heaven sent! The boys from "Forever Plaid" are back from the beyond to do a Christmas special. At first they aren't sure why they are back, but a phone call from the heavenly Rosemary Clooney tells them that they're needed to put a little harmony into a discordant world.

It's going to be a fun-filled holiday summer, and you don't want to miss it.

Your ticket includes a wonderful meal and unbeatable entertainment. Single show tickets are available for $25 a piece, and season tickets are only $60 a piece.

Tickets are currently available and can be purchased online, by phone or at the box office. Online purchases can be made at www.hardingtickets.com
Phone orders may be placed by calling 501-279-4580. If no one answers, please leave all your information and we will contact you. Box office sales are available in the lobby of the Ulrey Performing Arts Center on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Additional information is available at http://www.harding.edu/sfrye/ssdt.
The Sun Will Come Out for Homecoming

It may be five months away, but preparations are well under way for this year’s Homecoming musical, “Annie.” Auditions were held toward the end of the school year, and the production staff is working throughout the summer on costume and set design as well as choreography and other production plans. Though most of the casting is already done, there will be auditions in the fall for incoming students to have an opportunity at ensemble roles. In total there will be a cast of about 50 actors, including a dozen younger performers that range from 3rd grade to 12th grade.

The decision on which musical to produce at Homecoming is never an easy one, but “Annie” offered many positive opportunities in a variety of ways. Aside from the fact that “Annie” is a time-tested, audience-pleasing classic, it also sends a message that is very much in line with Harding’s foundational beliefs. The show sets forth the idea that no matter one’s current situation, there is always the hope for a better tomorrow.

Written in the 1970s and set in the midst of the Great Depression it is easy to draw emotional parallels with those times and today’s society.

“We are a Christ-centered theatre program that challenges students to develop superior artistic skills in order to serve others in the areas of ministry, education, and professional theatre.”

- Harding University Theatre Mission Statement

As Christians, we know that the situation today is not the issue, but how we face our situations and what are we promised is vital. We know that in this world we will have troubles, but our hope is in a better tomorrow, through Christ.

“Annie” will be presented during Homecoming Weekend on October 28 and 29, 2011. Please make plans to join us on campus for the show, and many other homecoming activities. For more information on Homecoming weekend go to www.harding.edu/homecoming
New Class Offered

This past spring, a few select music and theatre students had an opportunity to take a newly offered course in musical theatre. The main goal of this course was to blend the skills taught in acting classes with the skills taught in vocal music courses so that students would develop the ability to act their characters while singing. It is common in young performers that the way they act a character when they are singing is different than when they are simply speaking, but this class focused on creating one character that would be consistent through both.

In class the students worked through switching from the spoken word to singing as seamlessly as possible. During these workshop periods, the students were able to address and work on skills that were unique to their performances. They also prepared songs for and worked those songs in class. Both the midterm and the final exams consisted of performances. In fact, the final performance of the semester was open to the public. Their public performance was well received by the audience, and it was obvious that the students benefitted from the opportunities offered by this class.
An essential part of our educational program is a large project that takes place during a student’s third year and involves directing a one-act play. Regardless of whether a student prefers onstage or backstage work, this opportunity to facilitate a production from the driver’s seat provides them with vital experiences that will make them better actors and technicians. This year, six students took on the role of director and produced one-acts. Each student submitted scripts for faculty approval, cast the show from auditions, scheduled and executed rehearsals, worked with technicians on set, costumes, and props, supervised publicity, and entertained an audience.

The shows produced this year included “The Scheme of the Shiftless Drifter” directed by Logan Kays, “A Marriage Has Been Arranged” directed by Hannah Payne, “The Ransom of Red Chief” directed by Tyler Perring, “The Fall of the House of Usher” directed by Marcus Bellamy, “The Hound of the Baskervilles” directed by Cassie Bennett, and “World Without Memory” directed by Rob Yates.

These scripts ranged from hilarious comedy to powerfully serious, and they included both well-known stories as well as new and interesting plots. When asked about their experiences, the students mentioned teamwork, flexibility, and communication were among the most important lessons they learned. Juggling the many different aspects of the shows and all those that are helping with them gave these young directors a chance to grow in team building and leadership skills. They also found that even the best laid plans will not go perfectly, and they have to be willing to adapt and change. Finally, they found that it is extremely important to learn how to properly express what they are thinking to both the actors and the technicians in order to produce their show as they want it produced. Though many of these students will not be directing shows in their future, this project gives them insight and skills that will help them no matter what their future holds.
Pipers in Scotland

The Pied Pipers of Harding, the popular improvisational children's theatre troupe, finished their 2010-2011 season with an international tour to Scotland in May. The trip marked the 10th overseas tour for the troupe, which introduces theatre to more than 15,000 preschool and elementary school children every year. The Pipers worked with churches in Stirling and Aberdeen. Pipers performed in dozens of area schools and conducted daily theatre workshops with children. Parents attended evening sessions hosted by the local congregations.

This tour offers many opportunities for the children to be entertained as well as introduced to positive, Christian messages. It also attracted families to attend events at local congregations. However, the benefits aren't just for those whom the Pipers served. When asked about the trip, many of the Pipers have commented on the power of this experience in their lives. It was striking to see how the small congregations are just a handful of families that have banded together to encourage and strengthen one another. They were heartily encouraged by their host families and the work being done in Scotland. The Pied Pipers are no strangers to touring because they travel to several places within the United States during the school year, but this trip has been very different because of the direct involvement with the churches. This trip has been so much more than simply performing for children, it has been more about God and how he has worked in the churches of Scotland and how he works in the lives of those that serve him.

The Pied Pipers are now taking requests for the 2011-12 school year. If you are interested, contact Dottie Frye at 501-279-4492.
100 People/100 Dollars/100 Days

We need your help! We are currently raising funds in order to offer scholarships to incoming theatre majors. Scholarships are vital in the recruiting and retention of talented, dedicated, hard working students. In recent history, we have not been able to offer scholarships, but we are working diligently to change that.

We are embarking on a fundraising campaign to help give our scholarship fund a boost. We are looking for 100 people to donate $100 in the next 100 days. Setting a total goal of $10,000 will greatly increase the giving power or our endowment fund so that we can begin to give scholarships as soon as possible. Please seriously consider being one of our $100 donors. If you can’t give a full $100, then please consider giving whatever you are able. This campaign is a perfect example of how many people giving just a small amount can make a big difference. If you enjoyed your involvement in the Harding theatre program, and if you are encouraged by the activities you read about in our newsletter, then please take a minute and seriously consider giving to our scholarship program.

All donations will become a part of an endowment that will help fund scholarships for many future students. You may give online at this website: www.harding.edu/theatre/100.html

If you have any questions or would like to inquire about other methods of giving, you may contact Ben Jones at bjones9@harding.edu or by phone at 501-279-4294. If you are not able to contribute financially, then please add our efforts to your prayers. Thank you.