

THEATER NEWS

Spring 2013

Tavern Tales Is February Highlight

By John Corcoran, Jr.

First Stage temporarily turned its home at the Missing Piece Theatre in Burbank into the Dry Gulch Saloon for a February night of Tavern Tales. Hilarity and drama ensued, and not a hangover was to be found the next morning.

“Tavern Tales” was one of First Stage’s fabled theme nights, with the Knights of the keyboard combining with the Talented Theatrical Thespians for a night of plays about a specific topic. What was the topic, you ask? Seriously? You’re asking me that? It’s called Tavern Tales—figure it out, dude.

Oh all right, here’s what it was: Things that take place in a bar, saloon, Sarsaparilla Parlor, neighborhood tavern or other such drinking establishment. Once informed of the theme, writers—always willing to dig deep—feverishly researched the topic, then penned plays containing 45 minutes to an hour’s worth of their Blood, Sweat, and Genius—with not a cut-able word to be found. Upon checking the rules, they then pared all but about ten minutes from the masterpiece with the assistance of First Stage Writer’s Workshops. Under the velvet scepter of

Moderator Dan Roth, the writers learned what moved the play forward, and what pithy verbiage could be tossed or stuck under the chair for later.

When the dust settled, eight plays remained, casting and director selectage was undertaken, and rehearsals rehearsed. Come February 18th, the stage-read yet almost off-book performances took place before an audience ready to laugh, cry and dodge stray bullets. Well imaginary bullets. As luck would have it half the epics had robberies or whackings as subject matter. Love was in the air, and the imaginary booze flowed like stomped and fermented grape products.

Special special shout outs to Dan Roth, who acted in five of the plays, directed several, and Bennett Cohon who directed two and stepped in at the last second to take over lighting and tech duties without a rehearsal and the always affable Gene Dejoie, who emceed.

Congrats and thanks to the other actors, directors and playwrights, who took part: Vic Cabrera, Steve Cassidy, Jacque Lynn Colton, John Corcoran, Michael Doliner, Helen Duffy, Tyler Koster, Terry McFadden, Felix Racellis, Marcie Lynn Ross, Helen Yeoman, Arnie Weiss.

One-Act Play Contest

On November 19, 2012, we presented staged readings of three plays from our 16th Annual One Act Contest. The artistic committee chose the three finalists from a multitude of wonderful submissions, many of which came from across the country. It was a terrific evening of exemplary acting and wonderful playwriting.

Our celebrity judges were Maggie Grant, producer/director, Peter Kwong, Peer Governor at the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, Joe Estevez actor, director, and Angie Scott, Artistic Director of The Cherry Lane Theater.

First Place was awarded to David Brendan Hopes from Asheville, North Carolina, for his play OVERSEAS. It was directed by Dennis Safren and starred Arnold Weiss and Dennis Safren. The second place prize went to Jan Henson Dow of Bluffton, South Carolina, for her piece I WANT TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING. It was directed by Bill White and starred Marcie Lynn Ross and Steve Cassidy. And the third place winner was SOPHIE-ALEXANDER-LISBOA by Wendy Graf of Los Angeles, CA. It was directed by Bennet Cohon and starred Sydney Mason, Aaron Jennings, Dan Roth, and Dennis Safren.

Holiday Party: 2012

By John Corcoran, Jr.

If there is an event more anticipated among First Stagers—aside from getting a gig or selling a play—it might be the Holiday Festival/Bash/Blowout/Food fest/Prize-Drawing/Performance-enhanced/Good time/Chat ‘n’ Graze/Greet Old Friends and New/Good Eats/Have Fun/Break-A-leg Party and Eat-a-thon.

This year was no exception, as the First Stage Mirthmakers gathered Monday, December 10, at First Stage’s home headquarters, the Missing Piece Theatre in Burbank. There we enjoyed ourselves, renewed friendships, saw some special entertainment, and torpedoed any last second plans for pre-holiday diets.

Last year’s accomplishments and this year’s ambitious plans were laid out—quickly — it was a party after all. The event was also marked by a changing of the guard, with the introduction of new President, Gene Dejoie. As usual, the food was trucked in by the members themselves, with leftovers trucked out by selfsame members when the party ended.

There was live entertainment and a fun and boisterous prize drawing— the last event spoiled only by a dead battery in this writer’s video camera. That was solved, however, with an old video trick. I’ve used the previous year’s video.

And now, as the great Marty DiBargi once said: “Enough of my yakkin’” You are now cordially invited to see the video evidence of the event. Please go to the link and enjoy.... <http://youtu.be/wSnFXwy7Ros>

Member News

Helen Duffy is in a DirecTV commercial which was voted one of the funniest commercials of the year, and it will be incorporated in a television special titled... you guessed it... "The Funniest Commercials of the Year." She just landed a major role in the independent film "1982" directed by Jeremy Breslau.

Terry McFadden's play "Skidoo" just won the Raymond J. Flores Playwriting award in NY. And, in a happy coincidence, our own long-time supporter, Elise Marenson, ended up directing it.

Sunil Vernekar is performing in the play "Seven Deadly Sins" at Next Stage Theatre in Hollywood.

Tom Misuraca's "Golden Age" was presented at The Burbank Senior Artists Colony. His play "Tenants" which was workshopped and stage read at First Stage will be produced at Tehachapi Community Theatre.

Roberta Bassin performed in the lead role of Maggie Dowkowski in "Your Late Mother," a two act play reading by Marguerite Fair & Kevin Dobson at The Victory Theatre and will be reprising the role in a full production scheduled at The Victory Theatre for February of 2014. She also completed a standout feature film role opposite Eric Roberts. And Roberta was interviewed at KCLAFM radio on "The John Clenton Show."

One Act Play Depot has contracted with **Dan Roth** to publish his play "Chenille" in 2013. The play was successfully developed in the First Stage Writers Workshop.

John Corcoran's play "The Kid in the Trunk" earned honors in Playground-LA's February "Monday Night Playground" festival at the Zephyr Theater.

In the past year, **Roy Abramsohn** has been on the tv shows "Glee," "CSI: NY," "Private Practice," and "Happily Divorced." He just played the lead in a two-person play called "Souvenir: A Fantasy on the Life of Florence Foster Jenkins" at the Annenberg Theater at the Palm Springs Art Museum for two weeks.

And he still found time to shoot a role in the independent film "Escape From Tomorrow" which was accepted at the Sundance Film Festival.

Stanley Dyrektor's one-act play, "The Other JFK," which was work-shopped, and had a staged reading at First Stage with a distinguished cast, will soon be published by "One Act Play Depot" (OAPD). The play then was also stage read at the ActorsWorkout.

Marcie Ross will appear in a new play, "Therapy," written and directed by Jeff Bernhardt. The production will be at the Secret Rose Theatre in North Hollywood in March of 2013.

Pavel Cerny is directing and producing the revival of his "Belz, the Jewish Vaudeville Musical." The large scale production (19 actors playing 65 characters, 85 costumes. etc.) will open

at the Whitefire Theatre in Sherman Oaks on March 2, 2013.

Harry Cronin had a staged reading at First Stage of two of his plays, "Stone Crest" and "Brief Chronicle." Both were directed by **Bennett Cohon**, and **Dan Roth** performed in "Stone Crest."

Roger Brookfield, Associate Member from Ohio, won a Best Play of the Weekend Award in San Diego last October at North Park Vaudeville for his play, "Thank You," which was done at our 2011 Playwrights Express.

Dennis Safren, our Literary Manager and Dramaturg, and **Arnie Weiss**, long-time Actor Member, were both chosen to be on the panel of judges for the 2012 Julie Harris Playwriting Award.

Anita Borcia was recently cast in a CONOCO Phillips commercial.

Playwrights Express

We are now accepting submissions for our 27th annual fundraiser. The fundraiser will be held Saturday, May 18, from 1:00 PM to 10:00 PM and Sunday, May 19, from 1:00 PM to 10:00 PM at The Missing Piece Theatre (2811 W. Magnolia Blvd., Burbank, CA).

Submission Rules:

- Original work(s) - Excerpts O.K.
- No longer than 15 minutes. No more than 6 characters. 2-4 preferred.
- A tax-deductible donation of \$40 for each work.
- A DVD of your work will be available for an additional \$30 donation (covers multiple works by the same author).
- Include enough copies for each character plus director and tech director.
- All rights remain property of the writer.
- Deadline: April 19, 2013
- Mail to:

FIRST STAGE
P.O. BOX 38280
LOS ANGELES, CA 90038

All money donated goes to support all the free services that First Stage offers to writers throughout the world.

Each work submitted will be guaranteed a rehearsed staged reading on one of the two days of the festival.

Playwrights Express is for everyone -- the poet, novelist, screenwriter, essayist, actor, librarian, physicist, studio head, agent, lawyer, dentist, accountant, waiter, student, the hawk, the dove, and yes, even playwrights.