

What's Happening?

- ◆ Save some money. Get your Flex Pass for four performances during the season before January 15, 2010 and pay \$99. It will be \$115 after that. What a great Christmas gift that would be for the theatre goes in your family.
- ◆ Be sure to check our web site. Even when we are not in session, there will be some interesting information about the company's plans, not to mention previous theatre guides that will refresh your memories about plays that you have seen.
www.oldcastletheatreco.org
- ◆ If you enjoyed our delicious opening night parties, don't forget to thank our generous donors, The Four Chimneys Inn, the Mount Anthony Country Club, The Bennington Station and Thyme Tables.
- ◆ There are many opportunities to volunteer at Oldcastle. We welcome your help. We can use front desk assistance, office assistance, ushers, set builders and people to help on special projects. Call (447-0564) or e-mail us oldcastletc@gmail.com

Oldcastle Actors Express



Last year Sheila Childs directed *Damsels and Dragons*, for the Actors Express which presents plays to schools in Vermont, New York and Massachusetts. The cast was wonderful and flexible. This is important because they have to play in all different types of spaces. They also have to be prepared for some of the younger children to get up in the middle of the performance or to call out to warn the characters of what may be happening.

Since most of the actors have other jobs finding time for rehearsals is challenging. The plays usually are thirty to forty-five minutes long with time for Q and A afterwards.

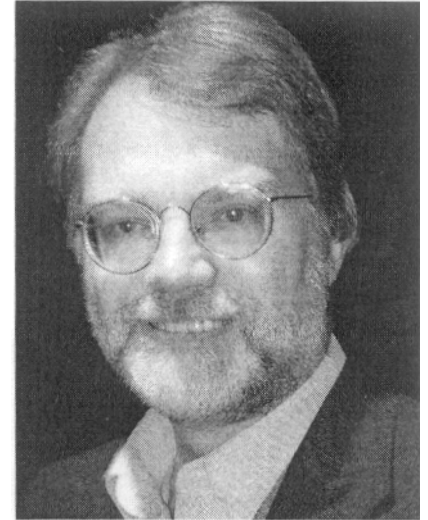


This year the play is *Bully Be Gone*, one of the group's most popular plays. Sheila makes the point that the children can be entertained while they are being taught. They can turn off teachers and parents, but watching a play is less threatening. Unlike television, they can talk about the play with the actors and each other after it is over.

Sheila also feels that taking plays to schools helps develop future play goers as the children become involved in the excitement of live theatre. She only wishes that they could visit more schools. Fortunately, thanks to a generous gift from the Bank of Bennington, this year schools will be able to pay less for the performances.

Oldcastle and The Community

Communities with theatres are better communities. Communities that really engage with their theatres are better still. We try in a variety of ways to be an integral part of our community. Presenting THE LARAMIE PROJECT TEN YEARS LATER is a good example. So is our Actors' Express production of BULLY BE GONE that is touring elementary schools this fall. We recently wrote a column for the Bennington Banner about bullying for the Southwestern Vermont Medical Center, that's another. So is our work with health classes at the middle school, presenting THIRD in a special performance for high school students is yet another, as is our collaborating with Southern Vermont College on Quest for Success classes and creating sketches for student's parents at orientation.



Presenting the work of Vermont and New England playwrights and searching for plays that speak directly to our audience is part of this quest too. A theatre in southern Vermont should, at times, shine a light on the people who live there and we have tried to do that with JUDEVINE, CIVIL UNION, FROST WARNINGS, SPINNING INTO BUTTER, THIRD, ETHAN etc. We try to do that with Q&A sessions following performances. This winter we will be working to help make our web-site more interactive so you can communicate more directly with us. We want to hear what you have to say. Please let us know how we can increase our value to the community. And if there are any plays you particularly want to see, let us know.

Thank you.
Eric Peterson

The Laramie Project Ten Years Later

On October 6, 1998, Matthew Shepard, an openly gay Wyoming College student was beaten, burned, tied to a ranch stake and left to die by two men he had met in a bar. After he was found, he died six days later. A month after his death, the The Tectonic Theatre Project went to Laramie, Wyoming and conducted over 100 interviews of the people there, creating a play that has been performed world wide and was a film on HBO. Ten years later they returned to find out what the impact of the murder had been on the town. They interviewed Shepard's mother, one of the murderers and numerous town's people featured in the first play.

From these interviews The Tectonic Theatre Project created their second play. They requested 100 theatres throughout the country present a reading of it on October 12th, the anniversary of Shepard's death. Oldcastle Theatre Company was the theatre in Vermont that was asked to do the play.

Southern Vermont College offered to host the reading which is free and open to the public. Like the original play, this piece examines the way in which ordinary people in a small community respond to a traumatic event that brought the issue of homophobia to world wide attention. Tectonic Theatre launched an online site www.laramieproject.org so that people can share videos, photos and reports of their experiences presenting the play in their communities.

Housing Actors



Diane Healey, the company stage manager and Carleton Carpenter, actor, joined Judy Murphy to talk about the pleasures of their stays with Judy. All of them were filled with stories about the good times they have together.

When Diane first came to Oldcastle, she had never been away from home. In her first year, Oldcastle had a separate house for the actors, which was somewhat like a summer camp. The following few years, she stayed with the Putneys which worked out very well. When the situation changed for them, she came to Judy's and has been there ever since. As she says unlike the actors, she is in Bennington for the entire season. Judy is like family and living with Judy feels like a second home. It is relaxing with a sense of stability which is a fine balance with her work at the theatre.

Carleton, who originally came from Bennington, has been acting at Oldcastle for fifteen or sixteen years and lived in a variety of different situations while working at the theatre. However, since he has been at Judy's, he, like Diane, feels that it is his home. When he comes earlier in the season, he meets with Judy's son and daughter and the daughter's family. When they all go off to the Cape,

Carleton has the house to himself and takes care of the cat.

The three of them all get along fine. Carleton says that Diane is the best stage manager that he has ever worked with on Broadway and off. Diane is always glad to see Carleton again. Judy feels that she is lucky to meet such wonderful stimulating people. She tells Eric, "I get Carleton whenever he comes."

Judy has been hosting actors for the nine years that she has lived in this house. She even redid the house to make it more livable for herself and the actors, adding a bathroom with the measurement help of David Groupe, who was Technical Director one year.

There is always room at Judy's house Diane says. If friends or family come up to see a show, Judy will put them up. Judy says that it feels lonely when no one is there. During the year, Carleton will call her to tell her about different programs she should watch. Judy is fascinated with all the stories that Carleton has to tell about famous people she has heard about or seen on the screen.

The actors have the run of the house. Carleton said, "We shop separately but we throw everything together in the refrigerator and everyone is entitled to use anything they want." They don't often get time to eat together because their schedules are such that they don't really see that much of each other. When they do, however, they have great stories to share, although Diane says, "What happens backstage stays backstage."

Judy has always loved theatre but has never been as involved and made such good friends. Talking with the three of them, just as talking last month with the Steffens, makes housing actors and stage managers seem one of the greatest pleasures possible.

Play Readings

The final play in Oldcastle's Play Reading series this year, *Smilin' Through* will be presented at the Orchards in Williamstown, Massachusetts on Friday, November 6 at 7 pm. The reading is free and open to the public. The Orchards will be offering a dinner before the reading at a reasonable price.

The two previous play readings were David Budbill's *Songs for My Father* and John Nassivera's *Sherlock Holmes and the People's King*.



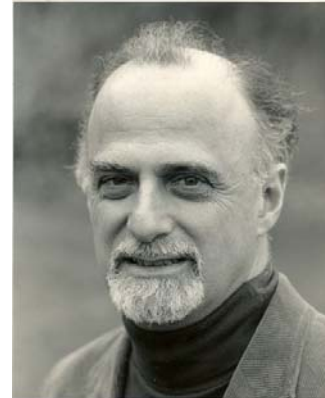
David Budbill's play was performed at the Bennington Station.



John Nassivera's play was performed at the Vermont Arts Exchange. Oldcastle is grateful to both those venues and the Orchards for the generous donation of those facilities.

One of the great advantages for the playwright at a reading is the opportunity to

hear what the audience has to say about the play. The audience has the opportunity to see a work in progress.



Bob Sugarman shares some of his thoughts about the reading and his play.

“Like all writing, playwrighting is done in isolation, but unlike other writing, it is only completed in public. Best of all is a performance with the playwright's words recreated by actors in something like the world the playwright had imagined. But a reading is a great middle step. It enables the playwright and those interested in the script an opportunity to see how the script might fare with an audience. SMILIN' THROUGH, is based on material I remember from growing up in the Great Depression. My Depression was not filled with breadlines or dust bowls. It was experienced in an upper middle class environment in Syracuse, New York. The American Dream my parents – both children of immigrants - had been living, seemed to have ended. However, the amenities from the time when there had been money were still present – even if heavily mortgaged. Some of the characters in SMILIN' THROUGH are based on my family and others, some are imagined. All the prototypes have been refashioned into characters in a play. Hopefully, the work gives a sense of that unique period that never really ended – it was replaced by World War II”.