

THE ROUGHIAN

Fall 2010

A Roughly Quarterly Newsletter of Theatre in the Rough

THE PUPPETS RETURNED

Once again, Holy Trinity and Theatre in the Rough presented *Shepherds, Wise Men & Angels*, the Christmas story told with puppets. Last year, the first event to open the new sanctuary at Fourth and Gold, this pageant was a great thing for us, for the parish and for everyone who came. After last fall's massive effort to get all nineteen of the puppets built, this remount was a breeze.

The puppets spent the year dodging the continuing construction. A few broken limbs needed splinting with red cedar and glue but a little vacuuming took care of the drywall dust.

The flesh-and-blood cast this year includes many from last year, some new to the pageant and a few making their debut. The youngest is three.

The weekend before Christmas, 388 people set aside a half hour of their busy holiday preparations to come see this transporting collaboration between Holy Trinity and Theatre in the Rough.

The pageant will be presented one more time on Christmas Eve as part of the usual Family Service at 5:30 PM. No tickets needed for Christmas Eve: all are welcome.



The TR Board with Father George and Mother Hunter Silides of Holy Trinity join the cast of *Cyrano de Bergerac* on stage before the closing performance at the Old Elks. TR presented Holy Trinity with a check and a lighting system worth a total of \$100,000. Photo by Hanna Schempf.

NEW HOME FUNDED: TR TOPS \$155,000

ROUGHIANS AWASH IN DISBELIEF & DEEP GRATITUDE

In just two and one half years, Theatre in the Rough has raised over seven times it's annual budget to help rebuild their new home at Fourth and Gold.

The long-awaited moment passed quietly by over the Thanksgiving weekend. The final dollar might have been for a chair pledge on our web site or for a bag of Coffee in the Rough at Rainbow Foods. It is hard to be sure, but sometime between that Wednesday night and the Friday night following, the New Home Fund passed the \$150,000 mark and kept on rising.

The total includes \$100,000 worth of cash and lighting equipment paid to Holy Trinity on November 7. The lighting system will be installed in the new Hall and the cash will help build the stage. The to-

tal also includes a few pledges not yet collected and some expenses along the way. But it is done.

Particular thanks must go to the Machamer, Blackwell, and Skaggs Foundations, whose combined donations totalled \$26,000. Theatre in the Rough itself donated \$25,000 from savings and ticket sales. The eight members of the TR Board donated over \$18,000. Sales of Heritage Coffee's Coffee in the Rough raised almost \$5000 and the Chair Pledge Drive has raised over \$20,000 so far.

Every dollar came from people who care about this project and this theatre. It would not have happened without such incredible, passionate support.

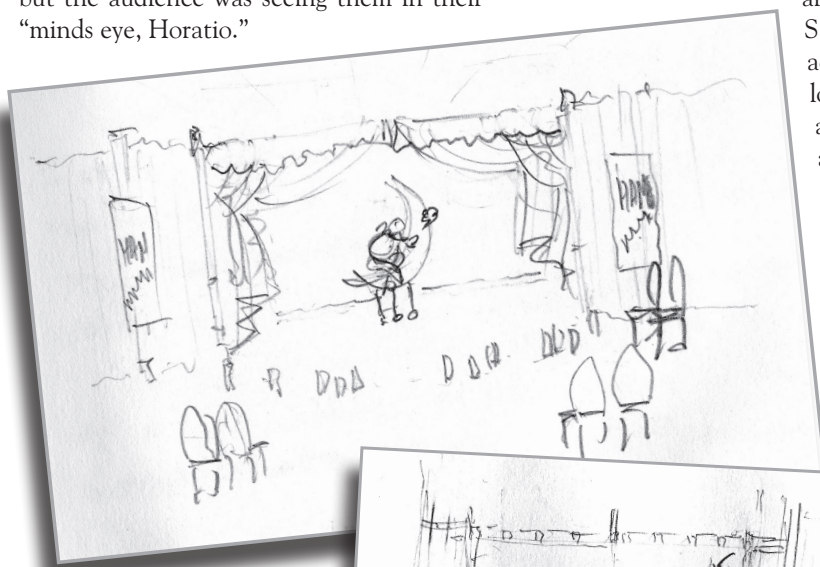
Thank you all.

FROM THE SKETCHBOOK

Shakespeare, TR's writer of preference since our inception, wrote at a time when production values were limited to what the actors themselves could carry on tour from town to town. The impression from the scripts we have is that props and scene shifts were physically minimal. The qualities of locations ("the vasty fields of France"), times of day ("the very witching hour of night") even the quantities of people we should imagine might be described in lush completeness but the audience was seeing them in their "minds eye, Horatio."

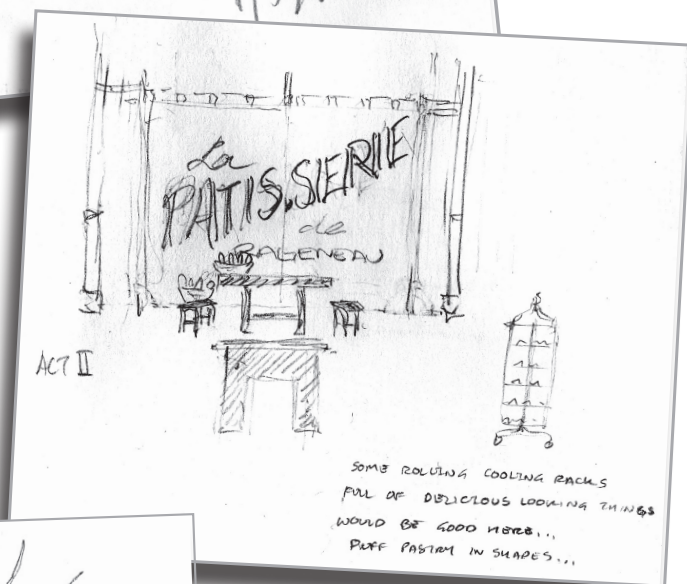
to the theatre expecting to see the locations right in front of them. This raised some challenges for us. The five very different locations in the play each require some element, (a theatre stage, masses of pastry, a balcony, fortifications, a tree) that is "really there." The play asked us to step out of our scenic comfort zone into the dark and treacherous world of Naturalism. We met it half way.

The thumbnails (small, rapid conceptual drawings) you see here are us trying to balance our semi-Shakespearean aesthetic (born of long experience and light purses) and the invitation to stretch arising from this wonderful play.

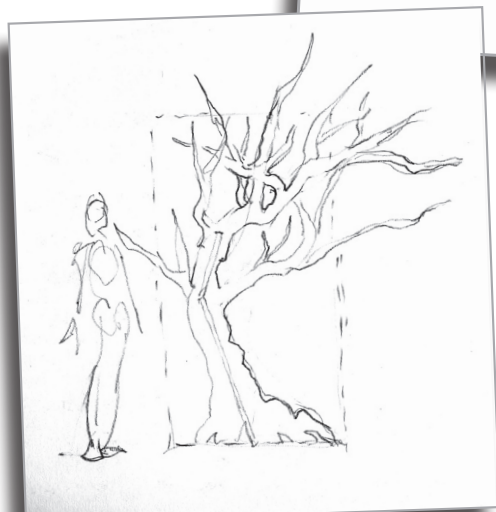


Shakespeare's spare production requirements has, no accident here, a rough quality which keeps the evening moving and keeps costs and inventory down. This is Theatre in the Rough all over.

Cyrano de Bergerac, however, was written at a time when the audience came



Top, Act One of *Cyrano*, set in a makeshift theatre. Montfleury can be seen, perched on his moon. The lumps on the floor are flameless candles, a pretty idea we cut for lack of money and too much to move in the scene shift. Middle, Act Two, the bakery ended up looking more or less as originally planned. Bottom, *Cyrano's* favorite tree from Act Five, in the convent. As a piece flat scenery on wheels, it underlined the theatricality of the whole play. The dashed line shows the 4'x8' sheet it was to be cut from.



THE NOW McPHETRES

Drywall is flying onto the walls and ceiling now, giving a distinct feeling of "final phase" to the place and making it sound like the biggest shower stall in the world. The live acoustics will dampen some as soffits, ceiling tiles and the proscenium wall are added.

Sergei Morosan is working on the final design for the much anticipated audience seating platform. Options still being considered include local manufacture from aluminum as well as pre-engineered but custom manufactured systems from down in America. Quality, utility, stability, and compliance with all applicable city codes are at the forefront of considerations.

COFFEE IN THE ROUGH

Heritage Coffee has generously offered to continue to sell us the delicious Coffee in the Rough at wholesale cost. After a brief gap in inventory, we hope to make it available again, with new labels, by New Year's. Rainbow Foods will continue to sell it, at no cost to us.

Art in the works for new labels will be inspired by *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *King Lear*, *Merchant of Venice* and *The Winter's Tale*.

In an effort to make your collections complete, plans are afoot to reissue short runs of last years labels. If you missed any, this may be your chance to pick them up. Again, thanks to Rainbow Foods for putting up with all this.

Also for 2011, be on the eye for Decaf in the Rough, a smooth, non-jitter-inducing way to support local classical theatre.

COMING CELEBRATIONS

March 12th, 2011 marks the five year anniversary of the burning of McPhetres Hall. October 31st, 2011 marks the 20 year anniversary of Theatre in the Rough.

Plans are afoot for marking these occasions in style. More news as events warrant.

FROM THE BOARD(S)

TR Board Members and The Stage

This coming winter will end in a spring of many changes. We will produce our first American Classic. We will end a three year fund raising campaign. We will move out of the Old Elks and take up residence in the New McPhetres Hall. Giant changes.

Putting on *Our Town*, our first American Classic, doesn't feel much like change. True, its citizens don't settle their differences with rapier and dagger and they wear weird stuff like neckties and suspenders. That's just window dressing. *Our Town* is frankly theatrical, low on production values and big on, well, heart. That's TR all over. It is also about Americans living and creating their town. That's us all over, too.

Finishing the New Home Fund does feel like a change and a big one. Carry and care for something for almost three years, it becomes a part of your eyes and hands and shoulders. It can be hard to put down. And this burden was shared by so many skilled, generous and enthusiastic people, the work often felt like an end in its own right. But now it's done. It was good to do. We were good at it. But it is time to stop. I'll be OK.

Moving into the New McPhetres, now there's a change. Huge. Fraught with questions. Gibes about needing to change our name to Theatre in the Not-So-Rough strike a chord. We have long been known for transforming any old room into a place where Transformation can happen, for asking the audience to make up for our shortcomings with their imagination, for changing the seating and stage configuration with every show. So, if we stop transforming spaces, will we stop transforming ourselves? Will legit facilities make the audience stop stretching, stop helping? If we don't change the stage every time, will all the shows look the same?

How we work has formed who we are. If we change how we work, will we stop being Theatre in the Rough?

Doubts and butterflies aside, I say no. Change makes us but it don't stop us becoming ourselves.

I think I've said this till I'm blue in the face, but transforming all those empty rooms took a tremendous effort. Hours and days every show. Now, says blue-face, we can do other things with that time. And, truth be told, the New McPhetres is really just another empty room which we transformed, more or less permanently this time, into a real live theatre.

Imagination will continue to be required for our success because we are simply too in love with live theatre as an art form to let it go. We are not making couture gowns.

We are not painting pictures. We are creating live performance (using gowns and paintings and a lot of other art forms as well) which will always live somewhere between and because of the actors and the audience creating together. Just because the lobby is warm and dry, the seats are comfortable and the lights are not plugged in behind the kitchen stove doesn't mean we will ask less of the audiences' imagination.

Finally, I think we changed the stage so much because we had to rebuild it every time anyway. And we didn't really change it that much. Only ever had about three set ups. The picture frame stage in the New McPhetres will be new to us, at least at first, but not unknown. *Henry IV, Part 1, Complete Works*, and our recent *Cyrano* were all, more or less, picture frame style shows. Plus, it was a style favored by the Romans. The ancient

Greeks weren't far from it either. It's an idea with some legs under it. Yes, for three generations it was associated with the dreadful excesses of the 19th century but leaving it didn't prevent those generations from a few dreadful excesses of their own. It is not the space or the shape that matters really. It's what you do with it.

Besides, just because the stage is built-in, doesn't mean we can't change the shape of the world if we want to. We still have a few tricks up our puffy sleeves...

Perhaps no one needs to hear this but me and if that's true, I thank you for letting me run on. There is lots to think and dream about these days and writing you all this spreads the load. And we dream the future together.

Aaron Elmore has been a theatre practitioner in Juneau since 1991 when he and Katie Jensen

coopted (and embodied) the cliché Diamonds in the Rough and put on Lanford Wilson's Talley's Folly. To his delight, people came. They're still coming. He's still delighted.

Aaron's Particular Thanks

As co-artistic director of TR and the driving force behind the creation and completion of the New Home Fund, I'll claim this chance to extend my most heartfelt thanks to all of you who helped make this happen. You kept your money coming, just when it was needed. You scribbled notes of encouragement. No mater how brief, they were so sustaining. You are all amazing.

I would thank all properly and I'll never be able to. That needs must be. I am, however, bound to single out a few. First my fellow founder and co-artistic director and wife of almost 20 years, Katie, of course (without which not), who saw all the bad days too and yet encouraged me when I felt the least worthy and advised rest whenever I would listen. The Roughest of the Rough, the TR Board: Ed, Donnie, Pete, Megan, Larri and Mikey-mike. Their collective wisdom kept light on the path and the cliffs edge. My boss, Daryl Miller, of Commercial Signs & Printing, who kept me employed and remained understanding, even when my billable hours shrank to a whimper from all this extra-curricular activity. Sam Skaggs and Amy Volz whose strategic advice (and generosity) was invaluable. Ken Leghorn of the Juneau Community Foundation, cheerleader and guide, who connected us with some amazing people. And finally Marshal Kendziorek, my first ask, and my first "Yes." It made all the other asks (and all my "Nos") so much easier.



THEATRE IN THE ROUGH

OUR TOWN

by Thornton Wilder

March 2011 @ the NEW McPHETRES HALL,
Parish Hall of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church Fourth & Gold, Downtown
Thursday - Saturday @ 7:30 PM, Sunday Matinees @ 2:00



THEATRE IN THE ROUGH

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Theatre in the Rough Board

Megan Behnke
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May the deepest
peace & joy
of the turning year
be yours.