

January 2005

## Broadway to Hollywood: A Musical Extravaganza

A special fundraiser for Hospice of Iowa City, **Broadway to Hollywood: A Musical Extravaganza** will hit the stage at West High School on February 26 (7:30 p.m.) and 27 (2:00 p.m.), 2005. The event is sponsored in part by City Circle and City Circle members are participating on and off stage. June Braverman directs, Michael Stokes choreographs, Judy Carlson is coordinating costumes and familiar City Circle faces are everywhere. Audiences will enjoy the talents of some 116 performers including Sprie Spriestersbach, George Stratton, Marcia Hughes, Patti McTaggart, Rachel Hileman, Julie Ricci, Jerry Howe, Michael Jorgenson, Chris Okiishi, Chris Carpenter and others familiar to our group. City Circle's enthusiastic support speaks well for our continuing interest in and contributions to the communities we live and work in. Hospice is most appreciative!

*June Braverman*

DON'T MISS **Talk of Iowa Live from the Java House** with Ben Kieffer, Friday, February 25, 2005 at 10 a.m. on WSUI AM 910. June Braverman and Maggie Elliot of Iowa City Hospice will be Ben's guests talking about the show and Hospice. Several songs from the show will also be performed by cast members.

## The Water is Wide



A well-known vaudevillian has been oft quoted as saying an actor should "never work with children or animals." For a while there I'm sure many of the cast of **Metamorphoses** (City Circle's production of Mary

Zimmerman's play produced in and around the new City of Coralville Aquatic Center pool) might have added, "never work in the water." But, in the end, and thanks to a strong collaboration with Sherri Proud and the City of Coralville, as well as City Circle's talented technical staff headed by Brian Gilbert and Kurt Stevenson, many of us began to feel like we should do all our plays in the water.

I came to the production relatively late. The original director had pulled out due to sudden scheduling conflicts and I volunteered to step in. About this same time, Sherri Proud had approached the City Circle board about doing some sort of performance to celebrate the opening of the new pool. As far as I know, no one on the board was a math major, but we all quickly added things up and a collaboration was born.

Working in the water did, of course, present its own challenges. Ms. Proud and the Aquatic Center staff went out of their way to find us rehearsal times, sometimes allowing us to linger in the pool long after the August dusk. But due to the fact that the pool wouldn't in fact be closed to the public until just four days before our opening, most of the rehearsing took place on dry land or without lighting and sound capabilities.

In the end, we had about two days to get the lighting rigged. Working with the City people, Brian Gilbert, Chris Gerken, and the folks from Sound Concepts devised a tower system that not only could cover the entire playing area, but was suitably far enough away from the water to ensure safety and comprised of equipment sturdy enough to withstand two weeks of potentially inclement outdoor weather. Anyone who saw the final product (see <http://www.crall.org/metamorphoses/> for some photos by cast member Aprille Clarke's fiancé Denny Crall) can attest that they more than achieved their goal, creating some of the most beautiful lighting in City Circle's history.

Sound also proved challenging. Given that we were performing outside, we had to use some sort of amplification and body mics seemed to make the most sense. Unfortunately, there wasn't budget sufficient to rent enough mics for the whole cast to have their own individual mic, so we had to share, transferring them from person to person. Combining lightning fast and often wet costume changes with a sprawling "back-stage" and dressing area, as well as the fact only one of the six mics was at all water proof, proved challenging at times (on opening night, one mic was temporarily put out of commission when an actor, in a moment of emotion, knelt too far in the water and submerged his transformer

pack...). Eventually, under the direction of sound designer Kurt Stevenson and board operator Cathy, the sound kinks were worked out at an astonishingly steep learning curve.

A special note must be made of the actors, who with little or no complaining, literally dove into their work. Even on the coldest of nights, when steam was rising off the heated pool, the actors to a person pulled together and gave it their all. Even if it meant getting a line out through chattering teeth, in particular during the grueling tech rehearsal, they stuck it out and we were rewarded with six nights of near-perfect show weather. Though we had rented portable heaters for the audience, we only ended up using them once. And though the second week was scattered with rain, our audiences remained essentially high and dry.

So, what does this mean for the future? Will we ever attempt something on this scale again? Time will tell, but at the very least, we know we can do it and we are not afraid!

*Chris Okiishi*



### New Play Festival

City Circle has as a part of its mission statement the goal to provide educational opportunities for the community. In the past, this has included production workshops, children's days, peaking engagements and a myriad of private instruction. This year, we added a new venture under our educational banner, the First Annual City Circle New Play Festival.

The idea, first proposed at a Play Selection Committee meeting in Fall of 2003 by Bret Gothe and Kim Benesh, was to provide local playwrights with a space and a production staff to stage short new works. In addition to allowing these authors to see their shows "on their feet," this experience would allow City Circle actors and directors the opportunity to work on a play from the ground up, and interface directly with the author in the process.

A call for scripts went out in Spring 2004, and by the deadline of June 30, over 30 some scripts had been submitted. Of these, the Play Selection Committee whittled down the list to six. "Yellow Marrow" by Paul Rust, "Circle Game" by Jacob Burris, "The Way It Starts" by Amy White, "Catchin' the Babies" by Susan Gilbert, and "Scrubbed White" by Frank Mitchell. Jason Hedden stepped up to direct the first two, and the authors directed the latter two. In collaboration with the actors, I staged the middle two.

What an experience this turned out to be! And, indeed, a wholly successful one. Not only were we gifted with six remarkable plays, they were also quite different in theme, tone, subject matter and style. Yet, somehow, they formed a delightful evening of theater, taking the audience on a journey at times unexpected, but always compelling. This will be a hard act to top next year!

Special mention must be made of Maria Schroeder who, in the regrettable absence of an overseeing director (a design flaw that will be corrected next year), was left with an immense undertaking—coordinating and producing six plays at the same time! That the shows went off at all is a tribute to her dedication. That they arrived so successfully is a tribute to her talent.

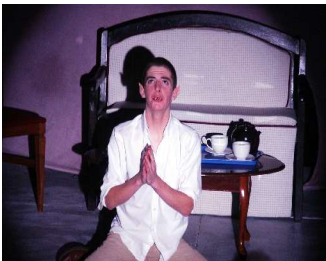
So, what's next? Perhaps that's up to you! We know there are hundreds of hidden heroes out there with scripts languishing partially written in a word file somewhere. Track them down and get them ready for we will be looking for submissions again this Spring for the Second Annual Festival.

*Chris Okiishi*

### New Play Festival



### BAT BOY



We used only ten actors in the cast of the show, small cast by most musical standards. But what a powerhouse those ten were! The authors indicate in the script you can cast 10 actors or 110. The original New York production used only ten, so we thought if they can do it that way, we can do it that way. It really worked out great and afforded several of the actors in the show to play multiple roles. Sometimes playing three different characters within a 90 second scene and many times even changing the gender of their characters. With time enough to only change to minimal of costumes the actors still manage to portray distinct and diverse characters and the script dictates.

And of course, the title character is small person, a half-bat half boy-child, diminutive in size but not in talent. Andrew Redlawsk, a young actor who attends West High School, had the opportunity to play the role. And what a role! At the top of the show, a wild feral, naked boy found in a cave by three teenage one of whom he attacks by biting her neck. As the show progress he comes educated, clothed, well mannered and well spoken, but unfortunately never loses his taste or need for blood.

Blood became an ever-present prop in the show, and our stage manager had to order by the gallons. Bloody severed cows head, bloody and bleeding rabbit, rats, geese, and knives peppered the production with their presence. Imagine the clean up after. Nightly washing of bloody costumes. Thanks goodness for Alec, our follow-spot operator, who made himself the blood clean-up crew, mopping the stage floor at intermission and after ever performance.

For those of you who had the opportunity to see the production of *Bat Boy*, thank you and I hope you had as much fun watching as we did presenting it. And remember...Don't deny your beast inside. *Michael Stokes*

Size really doesn't matter. Oh sure, we've all heard that many times but City Circle's **Bat Boy: The Musical** proves the phrase true and many different levels. At first glance it seems like a nice little musical, cute songs, small cast, small orchestrations....but after weeks or preparation and rehearsal it is anything but small on intensity, talent, depth and entertainment value.

The diverse styles of music the composers chose to use seem simple enough at first hearing. As we began rehearsing we found it challenging on many levels. Close harmonies are profuse throughout the score. Ranges are high for men's voices and low for women's voices. Quick tempos and lots of lyrics made it a challenge for the actor/singers to make sure the audience understood what they were singing. This was especially important since the songs actually advance the story throughout the musical. Fortunately, we were blessed with an outstanding vocal cast that rose to the challenge the score provided.

HO, HO, HO



Special thanks go to actor Tim Budd for making **The Santaland Diaries** a huge success. Going from 3 performances last year to 9 performances this year, Tim took the challenge and gave his audiences a memorable

show. **The Santaland Diaries** was Tim's seventy-fifth show since he began acting in high school, a milestone that City Circle was fortunate to share.  
Coralville Recreation Center  
1506 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
Coralville, IA 52241

PRSRT STD  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Iowa City, IA  
Permit No. 61

## **A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD**

***A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD*** by the Brothers Reale, is based on the classic children's books by Arnold Lobel. The show is the first collaboration between City Circle Acting Company of Coralville and the Iowa Children's Museum in what will hopefully become an annual event. This program will have the child in all (regardless of age) laughing, singing and having a wonderful time.

City Circle is the first community theatre group in the United States to obtain the rights to this play and we are very excited about this production. Tickets are available by calling our Box Office at the Coralville Recreation Center, 319-248-1750. Tickets are also available at the Iowa Children's Museum – Coral Ridge Mall and J. Hall Keyboards. For questions, call City Circle's Office at 319-541-2980, email [CityCircle@aol.com](mailto:CityCircle@aol.com) or check out our web site [www.citycircle.org](http://www.citycircle.org). The shows will run February 11 through 27, 2005 on Fridays (7:30 PM), Saturdays (2:30 & 7:30 PM) and Sundays (2:30 PM) at the Iowa Children's Museum.



## **AUDITION NOTICE**

Auditions for **MORNINGS AT 7** will be held on January 30<sup>th</sup> from 2 – 4 p.m. and January 31<sup>st</sup> from 7 – 9 p.m. Parts for 4 men & 5 women, ages 40-70. Script available at Coralville Public Library. Auditions will be at the Community of Christ Church, 2121 South Ridge Drive in Coralville.