

Hail to Thee, *Blithe Spirit!**

Take an eccentric spiritualist, a skeptical novelist doing research on séances, a second wife and a pair of guests, place them together in an English manor house, and you have the recipe for an evening of madcap fun. The Wimberley Players will be presenting Noel Coward's inimitable comedy, *Blithe Spirit*, from February 9-25 at the new Wimberley Playhouse.

The socialite Condomines, Charles and Ruth, invite Dr. Bradman and his wife to a small dinner party. Eccentric Madame Acarti, who also joins them, makes a series of rather odd attempts after dinner to conjure up spirits. The only one who can see and hear directly that she has succeeded in calling up long-dead first wife, Elvira Condomine, is Charles. Temperamental Elvira quickly becomes an unwanted guest as she seeks to disrupt Charles' current marriage. Her antics create havoc and Ruth starts seeing things happen that are otherwise inexplicable. Charles reveals what has happened and Ruth decides she will not let her ghostly rival stay without putting up a fight. Madame Acarti is finally called back in to try to repair things but the mischief only increases.

The role of Charles Condomine is played by **Carl Galante**, familiar to many as Ben Franklin in the fall production of *1776*. **Beth Burroughs**, an Austin actress who has appeared in numerous film and theatre productions, including *Steel Magnolias* and *The Trip to Bountiful*, plays Ruth, Condomine's no-nonsense second wife. The Bradmans are portrayed by a Wimberley husband-wife team, **Martin** and **Judith Driscoll**, who appeared in the recent Players productions of *1776* and *I Love You, You're Perfect Now Change*, respectively. **Judith Laird**, who has delighted Wimberley audiences for years with her lively comedic portrayals, is the dotty Madame Acarti. Austin is home for the talented **Aleta Garcia**, a theatre veteran from Arizona who performed recently in *It Runs*

in the Family and *365 Days/365 Plays*. She portrays ghostly Elvira, and **Amber "Kera" Harmon** is the ever-dashing housemaid Edith.

Blithe Spirit is directed by **David Bisett** and produced by **Pam Shultz**. Assistant Director is **Denise Bjerke** and Associate Producers are **Terri Burney-Bisett** and **Jana White**.



Seated from left: **Beth Burroughs**, **Carl Galante**, **Judith Laird**, **Martin Driscoll**, **Judith Driscoll**. Back: **Kera Hamond**. Front: **Aleta Garcia**

Noel Coward wrote *Blithe Spirit* in 1941, after his London office and flat had been destroyed in the Blitz. Both actor and writer, Coward felt people needed an escapist comedy after the dark days they had just been through. *Blithe Spirit* was performed nearly 2000 times during its first run and has delighted audiences throughout the decades since.

The play will run weekends from February 9 to 25 at the Playhouse, 450 Old Kyle Road (between the Square and FM 3237). Per-

formances are 8:00 on Fridays and Saturdays and 2:30 on Sundays. The opening night reception, February 9, will begin at 7:00 p.m. in the lobby.

Tickets can be reserved by phone starting January 29, by calling 847-0575. They will be available for purchase at the theatre box office starting February 5. Box office hours are 1:00-5:00, Monday through Friday. All tickets are \$15. Visa and Mastercard are accepted.

For more information, visit the Wimberley Players newly improved web site at www.wimberleyplayers.org.

**To a Skylark*

*HAIL to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert--
That from heaven or near it
Pourest thy full heart*

In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Percy Shelley, 1792-1822



Generous gifts wrap up '06

Once again, the Wimberley Lions Club has made an important contribution to the Wimberley Players. In November, 2006, a check for \$2500 was presented to Kathy Gamel and Julie Ray at the Lions Club meeting at the Community Center. The funds are designated for equipment for our Box Office. Thank you, Lions!

In December, a significant contribution of \$7000 was made by the Burdine Johnson Foundation to fund a video monitor and projection system for the theatre. In addition, a multimedia projector and screen will enable presentations in the theatre - as enjoyed during the Annual Meeting in January. David Bisett made the grant application. Thank you to the Johnson Foundation for this wonderful gift.

Our own Life Members were asked by letter in November to consider making a special gift toward equipping our new Scene Shop. Response was excellent, with more than \$2700 donated to date. Thanks, Life Members!

The Wimberley Rotary Club has donated a book in honor of the Wimberley Players to the Hays-Caldwell County Women's Center. The bilingual book, *Read Aloud Poems for Young People* by Glorya Hale, is now part of the on-site library for children living in the facility. Thank you, Rotarians, for making us part of your outreach.

President's report

2006 was an exciting year for the Wimberley Players. After 27 plus years of renting theatre space, the Players moved into their new Wimberley Playhouse on Old Kyle Road. We can now offer comfortable seating for 110 patrons and efficient dressing rooms for our actors. This past year we performed five plays and two special events and held a number of receptions in our lobby for our members and volunteers.

None of this would have happened without the generosity of our members and hours of work by our dedicated volunteers.



David Bisett (l) and Al Sander: Handing the gavel over to a very able Player.

I thank all of these people for their support during my term as President of the Players and I look forward to being a Board member under the guidance of the 2007 President, **David Bisett**.

Once again, my heartfelt thanks to all of you for "Playing a Part."

Al Sander

Advertising Bonus

Season Tickets—For the Players, these two words will soon refer to five tangible birds-in-the-hand instead of an appealing abstract idea. And the Players' "season" will now conform to the academic calendar (September 2007-September 2008) typical of the arts.

One huge logistical question about the change quickly became apparent: What about all the advertisers in the program? The contracts for those who bought an ad in January 2006 expired in January 2007. What would the Players do for the three shows scheduled in February, April, and July 2007? We are thrilled to announce that the Board has voted unanimously that all 2006 advertisers who sign a 2007-08 contract will be included in those programs **free of charge**. In addition, they are guaranteed the same rates for 2007-08 as they paid in 2006. And they will receive a link on the website free of charge.

So if you purchased an ad in January 2006, don't call the fraud squad when one of the Players shows up and says you can have the next 18 months for the price of 12! We want you to know how much we appreciate your support.

Starlight Symphony Upcoming concerts

The Starlight Symphony Orchestra (SSO) has resumed rehearsals for the 2006-2007 season. Rehearsals take place Thursday evenings from 7 to 9 p.m. in Wimberley at the Wimberley Junior High School band hall. Any players interested in joining the orchestra should contact the orchestra's personnel manager, Pat Surguy, at dsurguy@austin.rr.com or (512) 858-0324. The orchestra is open to advanced students through adults. Openings in various sections vary, so call or e-mail for current needs.

The orchestra will perform two more concert programs to finish out the season. Coming up in March are the Young Artist Showcase concerts which feature the two Young Artist Solo Competition Winners, selections by the Starlight Symphony Youth Orchestra and a number of wonderful pieces by the full symphony. The concerts are March 3, 7:30 p.m. at the Austin Waldorf School, and March 4, 4:00 p.m. at the San Marcos Baptist Academy.

The last concerts of the season will be the May Pops Concerts, "Screen Works," with a variety of music from film, TV and computer screens, including video game music.

The SSO serves communities in Hays County and surrounding areas. Please visit www.starlightsymphony.org for all the latest information. If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please send us your street mailing address and contact information to receive reminders of upcoming concerts and events.



After the big ice storm and... Lee is planning her next summer camp

The 7th annual music theatre summer camp directed and produced by Lee Coleé-Atnip in conjunction with The Wimberley Players will be the heartwarming family classic, Meredith Wilson's *The Music Man*, one of Broadway's most beloved shows. Set in Iowa, this enjoyable look at small town America in a bygone era follows the exploits of fast talking salesman Harold Hill as he cons the townspeople of River City into forming a boys' band.

Camp dates are June 4-24 and auditions are open to boys and girls ages 8-16 by appointment. All those auditioning must be prepared to sing a short memorized song to instrumental accompaniment such as karaoke CDs or sheet music to be played on the piano. They must also be able to tell a short story and bring a head/shoulders photo. Beginners and experienced performers will be equally considered. There are wonderfully strong character roles in the show needing comic timing. Principal roles require strong voices and there are some great opportunities for dancers to show off their skills. For an appointment or info call director Lee Coleé-Atnip at 512-847-7934 or e-mail: lee@atnip.net.

Once selected to participate in camp (no more than 35 are accepted), the kids will work in a boot camp theatre environment with theatre professionals for 11 days before presenting seven performances of *The Music Man* to the public. This will be the first camp production in the new Wimberley Players Theatre. *(Continued in next column)*

Previous summer camp productions, to sell out crowds at The Old Greenhouse Theatre, include *Annie*, *Grease*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *The Sound of Music* and last year's *Oklahoma*. Local businesses often sponsor scholarship assistance to performers and host families will welcome out-of-town performers into their homes.. Many alumni of previous camps have gone on to strong careers in the arts.

Director Lee Coleé-Atnip, professional concert artist, actress, dancer and director, has maintained a private voice studio and talent agency in Wimberley for the past six years, while continuing her career as a recording artist and entertainer. Each summer she looks forward to working with the kids and watching them dazzle the community with their show business skills and love of performing.

AUDITION NOTICE

CHANGE OF PLANS! *Divorce Southern Style* is now the Spring Show. Auditions for this romantic farce are scheduled for February 12 and 13 at 7 p.m. at the Playhouse. Performances will run April 13-29. David Bisett will direct.

The show centers on a middle-aged divorcee's scheme to reunite with her ex-husband. One little fib leads to another as she goes to any length to keep all her stories straight with hilarious results. The cast includes 3 men 30-60 and 4 women 20-60+. Scripts are available at Unique to Antique. Please help pass the word to your friends.

Stay tuned for more information about the Summer show (July 20-August 5) which will be *Bright Ideas*, directed by **Shirley Marlett**.



Members of the 2007 Board of the Players gather for a photo at the Annual Meeting. Front row, l to r: Nora Moeller; Jane Dunham, Jana White, Judith Laird, Barbara Alexander, Lynn Adelson, Dee Ann Story. Second row: Adam Witko, Tevis Grinstead, John Hyink, Steve Thurber; Fay Allison, Kathy Gamel, Dell Hood, Al Sander. Back row: Marty Jacobvitz, Rob Sandefur and David Bisett. Inset photo, Lucy Dysart.



Happy annual membership meeting

Members gathered to applaud the past, welcome the future

It was an annual meeting like no other. On January 9, we enjoyed a full house of members and volunteers at the Wimberley Playhouse. Business came first in the Eastwood Theatre, followed by socializing and refreshments in the lobby.

President Al Sander set the tone by congratulating all who had had a hand in making 2006 a great success, including the monumental accomplishment of moving into our new home. Virtually everyone in the theatre was standing, as Al called for groups to stand according to their volunteer contributions. He concluded by asking all members to stand, noting, "We couldn't do it without you."

The Meeting in Brief:

Terri Bisett, outgoing Vice President/Finance, announced that we had had 60 performances, 28 of which were sell-outs, with an overall attendance of 81% at our 2006 productions.

Dell Hood reviewed the changes to the Players' by-laws which reflect more accurately what we do and remove gender-specific language.

Susan Thurber, member of the Starlight Symphony Orchestra, shared the news that the concerts have doubled their attendance in the last year, and that the orchestra has expanded its number of concert venues.

Rob Sandefur explained the Board structure and presented four nominees, all of whom were elected: **Marty Jacobvitz**, **Lynn Adelson**, **Dee Ann Story** and **Steve Thurber**. He also announced the play schedule through Summer 2007.

Judith Laird invited everyone not currently volunteering to sign up for more information on the many opportunities.

Julie Ray wrapped up the meeting with a slide presentation of the Players' 2006 year, entitled, Because of You.

Enjoying scrumptious hors d'oeuvres and wine in the lobby, members **Seba** and **Norman Parish** agreed, "We appreciated the compact, well-run meeting." **Annette Harper** commented on the excellent catering by **Linda Allen Catering**. Box Office volunteer **Linda Parker** said, "It's fun to see so many new faces in this crowd."

And it's on to more excitement as 2007 unfolds....



Kathy Gamel, Jan Prasek, and Jo Ann Ross: These Box Office volunteers would love to talk with you about your next ticket purchase!



Norm Parish: Looking forward to the next production, *Blithe Spirit*.



Gary Brim (l) and Gordon Dysart (r): All smiles at the party after the annual membership meeting.



Terri Bisett and Frank Austin: Wishing each other a happy new year in the lobby of the new playhouse.



New 2007 Board members Marty Jacobvitz, Steve Thurber, Dee Ann Story, and Lynn Adelson: Looking forward to contributing to the mission of the Wimberley Players.



Rob Sandefur and Charlotte Caldwell: Just like their tags said, they're *Players*.