



Photo by GENE ACHZIGER

Emily Klemkow is the stage manager for ACT 1 Theatre's *The Fantasticks*.

## Klemkow manages to keep busy behind the scenes, too

By Cliff Rowe

Emily Klemkow, sometimes actor, sometimes stage techie at ACT 1 Theater went to an early planning session recently for the play *The Fantasticks*.

It was an important meeting for her because she had been invited to attend in the capacity of assistant stage manager.

She was all set to make her behind-the-scene managing debut working alongside Stage Manager Kelly Gray.

Fifteen minutes into the meeting she lost the assistant part of the title and found she was THE stage manager.

The 18-year-old Sumner High School senior said she was ready.

She said that even as she performed in plays at ACT 1 and Sumner High School, she had an eye on those responsible for the curtain, lights and sound.

"I love that tech stuff," she said.

One of her greatest challenges with *The Fantasticks*, she said, is likely to be having to work with a group of actors ranging in age from Jayson Morberg, in his late teens as Klemkow is, to very-veteran actor Glenn Buttkus, an ACT 1 Theatre favorite.

Just as the actors, young and old, have their styles of learning and delivering lines whether in the midst of chaos or calm, Klemkow will be shaping her style of interacting with them when all is going well. Or when it isn't.

Klemkow was tapped by Director Petra Karr to stage manage *The Fantasticks* when Gray stepped aside to prepare to take her own next big step – directing the ACT 1 Theatre performance of *Blithe Spirit* in March.

And you can look for Klemkow later this month when she takes the lead role in the children's-theater performance of *Mother Goose Tells All*.

And then, who knows?



### ACT 1

Theatre Productions

Studio of Theatrical Arts

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\*Next to Fred Meyer Gardening Center

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ACT1TheatreProductions.com

### The sounds of music are alive at ACT 1

Taylor August Giles is rehearsing each week with talented local musicians and placing them in chamber groups which can then be combined for orchestral performances.

They will be performing this spring (stay tuned for details) and on July 1 as part of an old fashioned USO show being produced by ACT 1 Theatre in conjunction with the Sumner Arts Association.

Giles is also offering private violin lessons on Fridays at the ACT 1 Theatre studio. Anyone interested in scheduling a lesson time can contact info@Act1TheatreProductions.com

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**ACT 1**  
Theatre Productions

**AD LIB**  
Newsletter Feb. 1, 2016

## *The Fantasticks* is a fantastic chance for actors to shine

By Virginia Winger

An actor can expend abundant energy and passion in creating a role that provides an audience with only a few hours of entertainment. At the same time, it's that creative process that makes community theater so exciting for me and, probably, most of us who have the opportunity to share a stage.

For example, let me tell you about the creation of Helena, the mother I portray in ACT 1 Theatre's upcoming production of *The Fantasticks*.



It all started with ACT 1's open auditions prior to the 2015-16 season.

For me and other actors that was our opportunity to show the artistic director what we could do.

The cast for *The Fantasticks* was chosen from this audition pool and others in the ACT 1 Theatre company.

It ranged from veteran actors, such as Glenn Buttkus as Henry to young actors such as Jayson Morberg, who

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Photo by CLIFF ROWE

Virginia Winger is Helena in ACT 1 Theatre's production of *The Fantasticks* this month in both Sumner and Des Moines.



FANTASTICKS

From Page 1

plays my son Matt.

In December we met in small groups to work with the music director, Amy Boers. This was my first opportunity to work with my fellow mother in the play – Bella – played by Leigh Duncan.

The materials – music, scripts, staging instructions – were delivered later than expected, limiting our time to prepare for the show. Our first read-through, at the end of December, was the first opportunity for our entire cast to meet and begin exploring what the show is about.

Then came the hard part – memorize, memorize, memorize.

Over the next month, we met to block the scenes (determining who moves where and when) and work with the music director. There was no shortage of stumbling around and missing lyrics and notes.

We had no actual set at this point, so we used makeshift items to represent set pieces. A chair served as a trunk. Four poles linked with barricade tape marked the platform.

With each rehearsal, the set came closer to completion. The bench, chair and trunks arrived along with the actual platform. Props and costume pieces accumulated.

Then we came to the dreaded day where we were off-book – NO MORE SCRIPT.



Photo by CLIFF ROWE

ACT 1 Theatre veteran actor Jayson Morberg plays Matt in The Fantasticks.

The stage manager, Emily Klemkow, suddenly became our best friend as we yelled “LINE,” and she tossed us an oral hint. Director Petra Karr worked with the actors to develop their characters and shape the script into a living work that could bring laughter and sadness, anticipation and delight to the audience.

Inevitably, the cast bonded as we repeated the same songs and ran the same scenes over and over. We laughed as Mortimer,

played by Dan Lysne, crabwalked backward off the stage and El Gallo, Mackenzie Mason, tripped over his makeshift cape.

We worried when a cast member was hurting. We adjusted to a new cast member, Arwen Dewey, who stepped into the role of Louisa (and hit notes not heard in nature). We greeted and adapted to a new stage manager and dealt with other changes as results of unforeseen events.

By chance, we wound up with a cast and crew that like to bake so we know there will be serious dieting when his show is over.

Two weeks before the show was scheduled to open, the final run-throughs began and all the pieces really started to come together. Lyrics, music and movement became increasingly natural. Emily no longer tossed us our lines.

In the final week before the show, the technical crew stepped in to fine tune the lights, sound, and backstage. *The Fantasticks* is unique in that much of the stage-hand work is performed out front by The Mute, played by Jenette Troberg, giving the audience a visible taste of backstage activity.

We had a preview show on the Thursday before opening night to work out the kinks, calm our nerves and build confidence.

Now, it’s opening night. The hard work is done. We step out in front of the audience, trusting in our cast and crew and in our preparation.

Enjoy the show!



Photo by CLIFF ROWE

Sumner High School seniors Michelle Larsen, Caroline Knote and Grace Velzy combined their talent and forged a friendship in creating *Mother Goose Tells All*.

Take a gander at the trio behind *Mother Goose*

By Cliff Rowe

So, you’ve decided you’re going to write a play about Mother Goose. And it’s going to be bilingual. English and Spanish.

Where do you start?

You have a multitude of plots, after all, coming out of some 500 years of myth-building, nursery rhymes, and fairy tales. All of it built around a woman (sometimes, perhaps) everyone feels they know, but no one really does.

Confronted with this challenge, three Sumner High School seniors once upon a time, visited their school library as well as the city of Sumner library for scholarly research.

The trio – Caroline Knote, Michelle Larsen and Grace Velzy – emerged from hours of sifting through the story possibilities with no shortage of material. *Hansel and Gretel* and *Cinderella* were in their notes, for example.

As was *The Princess and the Pea*.

And *Little Ida’s Flowers*. Little Who?

They had found Little Ida – a little girl



and her dancing flowers – in the writings of Hans Christian Anderson and worked her in with the others as they crafted their adaption of the childhood tales into *Mother Goose Tells All*.

It will take the stage at ACT 1 Theatre March 11, 12 and 13.

Many of the youngsters turning out for the cast were familiar with previous children’s productions at ACT 1 Theatre, but the three writers also scouted among high-school friends and adults they knew for children with acting interests.

The final cast of some 25 actors, ranging in age from 5 to 19, is not only learning lines, but many of them are also learning Spanish, or at least its correct pronunciation.

Some will use both languages in their roles, while others just English or Spanish.

As for the three writers who had the idea for the play and took on the task of bringing it to life, they, too, have learned a great deal.

For one thing, while all three had written much in one format or the other, playwriting was least familiar to them.

Velzy had written scripts for film, while Knote had written mostly fiction, some in play form, and had also worked with youngsters as a camp counselor. Larsen has studied Spanish all through high school and has been instrumental in developing the play’s bilingual environment.

She’s also credited with contributing much of the humor to the story.

Knote said the play that has come out of this collaboration of the three writers is a narrative – “kind of a sweet story of how they all become friends.”

While the play appeals, naturally, to children, the three writers also think it will appeal to parents, grandparents and other adults as well.

Velzy and Knote, interviewed as rehearsals began, said their biggest challenge in writing *Mother Goose Tells All* was blending the elements of the four stories on which they focused to bring sense to the overall tale.

Knote said they also were surprised when they read through their first draft of the play to discover that it was shorter than they had expected. Providing *Mother Goose* with a little more space in which to tell all brought it to its final length of 40 minutes.

It can be assumed in keeping with the *Mother Goose* tradition, that at the conclusion they all will live happily ever after.

THE FANTASTICKS

A classic with a twist

The *Fantasticks*, is a funny, romantic musical story centered on a young couple in love and the interference of two of their parents in their romance. The play as written cast the respective fathers as the conniving parents.

ACT 1 Theatre Director Petra Karr has chosen instead to put their mothers into the story, a change other directors of the play have made in the past. While the lines in the play are not altered, the dynamics of the story with two women delivering them is different.

PRINCIPAL CAST

The Mute	Jenette Troberg
El Gallo	Mackenzie Mason
Matt	Jayson Morberg
Louisa	Arwen Dewey
Helena	Virginia Winger
Bella	Leigh Duncan
Henry	Glenn Buttkus
Mortimer	Dan Lynse

Join us at Wesley Homes in Des Moines for a special Valentine’s evening out, complete with a long-stemmed rose, decadent chocolate and a gift for each audience member.

SHOWTIMES

7 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays  
12:30 p.m. (matinee) on Feb. 7  
2 p.m. (matinee) on Feb. 14

Sumner Show Dates:

ACT 1 Theatre Studio • Feb. 5, 6, 7

TICKETS

Online: Adults - \$15  
Students, Military & Seniors - \$10  
At the Door: Adults - \$20  
Students, Military & Seniors - \$15

Des Moines Show Dates:

Wesley Terrace, 816 S. 216th St.  
Feb. 12, 14 (all tickets \$10)  
Feb. 13 (all tickets \$15)