



Photos by CLIFF ROWE

Rehearsals for *The Fantasticks* came to life, first, through the word as the cast met to read through the script late in December. Clockwise from top left are Leigh Duncan, as Bella, one of the meddling mothers; the elderly end of the cast spectrum, Glenn Buttkus as Henry, left, and Dan Lynse as Mortimer, and Jayson Morberg as Matt, the male half of the youthful romance.

FANTASTICKS

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forward with the financial resources for the show to continue.

Had the curtains come down, that would have been the production's second closure, the first having come in January 2002 after more than 17,000 performances at the Sullivan Street Playhouse. It reopened seven months later off Broadway at the Snapple Theater Center.

Whatever is occurring on Broadway, curtains have continued to stay up on the play, considered the longest-running musical in world history. In school and community theaters across the United States, the endurance has been just that: fantastic.

And in maintaining that legacy, *The Fantasticks* will premiere at Sumner's ACT 1 Theatre Productions' studio in February.

Those attending a Sumner performance there will hear, again, "Try To Remember," "Plant a Radish," and other show-

tune classics, and the singing should, indeed, be "beautiful" as accompanied by music director and pianist Amy Boers.

And the stage, as per the playwright's instructions, will be simple.

ACT 1's Director Petra Karr explained that such a set was called for by book and lyric authors Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt for a couple of reasons. First, they were defying the prevailing wisdom of mid-20th Century theater that musicals had to be complex and extravagant.

Second, they wanted the audience to focus on the play's story, not its surroundings.

And it is the simplicity of the set that will enable ACT 1 Theatre Productions to take the show north to Des Moines, WA where the curtain will rise at Wesley Homes Senior Living and Home Care – Des Moines for special performances on Feb. 12, 13 and 14.

The Wesley Homes performances are the first opportunity for ACT 1 Theatre Productions principals to realize their dreams of taking a full production on the road.

Simply beautiful.

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imagination



ACT 1 Theatre Productions

Studio of Theatrical Arts
5814-152nd Ave. Ct. E., Suite 104*
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Newsletter Jan. 1, 2016



Photo by CLIFF ROWE

Lights... Sound... Spud

Spud Stevens: Lady of Lights.

That was her role at ACT 1 Theatre Productions last month, anyway.

While those on stage played out the tale of *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, Spud perched in a chair behind the audience at the keyboard-like controls of the theater light board. At her fingertips was the ability to set the mood, direct the audience's attention, and alter perceptions.

With the two rows of 24 keys connected to lights above and behind the stage, she could turn day into night, warm an emotion, cool a thought, rivet attention or color a mood. Anger: red. Yellow: happiness. Blue: tranquility. The audience's perceptions followed her lead.

All on cue, of course.

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Photo by CLIFF ROWE

From her lightboard, Spud Stevens was able to transport audiences into the world of *A Charlie Brown Christmas*.

SPUD

From Page 1

It was Technical Director Chris Karr and Stage Manager Kelly Gray who encouraged Spud to try her hand at manipulating first the sound and then the lights of an ACT 1 Theatre Production. No longer was she in control of a single role — now she influenced the whole show. And she liked it.

“It’s a whole different side of theater,” she says with the charm of an actress and pride of a techie.

Spud, a 19-year-old student at Green River College, has performed in theater since second grade, beginning at Calva-

ry Community Church where she acted regularly for nine years.

In her senior year at Sumner High School in 2014 she played in the ensemble of *Godspell*, which was guest-directed by Petra Karr, permanent director at the ACT 1 Theatre Productions Studio just down the street.

Since then she has performed on stage with ACT 1 Theatre in *Christmas Pudding* in 2014 and *Sympathy Jones* last summer.

Now in her second year of study toward an associated arts degree at Green River, she intends to take that degree on to a four-year college. She’s not certain where or what course of study she’ll pursue, and she knows she wants to take



Kayla Spud Stevens

a year’s break from her studies before moving on. But exploring new experiences won’t take a vacation and her presence most likely will be felt at ACT 1 — on one side of the curtain or the other.



Coming to a theater near, and not-so-near you, too

Any play staged as many times as *The Fantasticks*, is likely to generate a wide range of reaction from audiences and critics alike.

A casual reading of criticism from New York City audiences and reviewers — where the musical had been performed 20,672 times by the time it arrived at what had been announced as its final performance this past May, also reveals a couple of common reactions from both groups.

First, its musical score is commonly labeled — simply — “beautiful.”

The music of *The Fantasticks* is nostalgic and American at heart. The lazy melodies and catchy rhythms coupled with lyrics that mirror the poetic dialog found throughout the play make these timeless tunes hard not to love.

Its set is often described as “simple” or “sparse.”

That beauty and simplicity were evident from opening night, May 3, 1960.

The combination served the production well until March of last year when its producers, citing erratic ticket sales, announced they would close the show on May 3, its 55th anniversary.

But almost immediately producers Catherine Russell and Al Parinello announced two fans of the show had stepped

PRINCIPAL CAST

The Mute	Jenette Troberg
El Gallo	Mackenzie Mason
Matt	Jayson Morberg
Luisa	Phoenix Lowdermilk
Helena	Virginia Winger
Bella	Leigh Duncan
Henry	Glenn Buttkus
Mortimer	Dan Lynse

See **THE FANTASTICKS** on Page 4

THIS FEBRUARY

ACT 1 delivers longest running play 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 Productions 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.

Karr said she made the change, in part, in order to take advantage of the way in which the two actors she cast as the mothers interact. The two, who have appeared in other plays at the theater, are Virginia Winger and Leigh Duncan.

Other veterans of ACT 1 Theatre productions in this cast are Mackenzie Mason, Glenn Buttkus, Dan Lynse and Jayson Morberg.

Please note: Our special Valentine’s event on Feb. 13 is not included with the Season Ticket package.

Showtimes

7 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays
2 p.m. (matinee) on Sundays

Summer Show Dates:

ACT 1 Theatre Studio

Feb. 5, 6, 7

Ticket rates

Online: Adults - \$15
Students, Military & Seniors - \$10

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



WESLEY HOMES™

Des Moines Show Dates:

Wesley Homes Theater, 815 S. 216th St.

Feb. 12, 14 (all tickets \$10)

Feb. 13 (all tickets \$15)

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