

READING COMMUNITY PLAYERS

Pennsylvania's Third Oldest Community Theater ... Founded In 1920



THE CALLBOY • NEWSLETTER FOR READING COMMUNITY PLAYERS • January 2012 ISSUE

January Dates to Remember:

- January 16.....Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. (observed)
- January 28.....Variety Show fundraising event at RCP

ASAP! Renew your membership! Only YOU can help our theatre not only survive, but grow stronger and get better!

Much of this issue will be dedicated to the results of the December General membership meeting where our new season was adopted and the new Board elected. Thank you to the many members who attended this very important meeting!

• Reading Community Players 2012 Season •

The **2012** season at RCP is as follows:

- **My Name is Ossian Sweet** – Friday, February 17 – Sunday, February 19, 2012, *directed by Ruth Martelli*
- **Leading Ladies** – Friday, April 20 – Sunday, April 29, 2012, *directed by Tara Sands*
- **A Pirates Life for Me** – Friday, June 22 – Sunday, July 1, 2012, *directed by Debi Silas*
- **Gaslight (Angel Street)** – Friday, August 17 – Sunday, August 26, 2012, *directed by Bruce McLean*
- **War of the Worlds** – Friday, October 19 – Sunday, October 28, 2012, *directed by Pat Perfect*

We would be happy to hear feedback from our members about the coming season!

• Reading Community Players Board for 2012 •

Newly elected members of the Board of Directors of RCP are:

Ruth Martelli.....President
Lizz Taylor.....Vice-President
Jodi Gibbs.....Treasurer

READING COMMUNITY PLAYERS

Pennsylvania's Third Oldest Community Theater ... Founded In 1920



Brian Wachowicz.....Secretary
Pamm Savage.....Business Manager
Diann Stewart.....Membership
Joseph Majesky.....Tech, Webmaster
Pat Perfect.....Production
Celeste Montgomery..... Publicity
Kevin Wade.....Backstage Manager
Debbi Silas.....House
Mark Martelli.....Graphic Design

Much success to this Board in 2012. There is much to do to make us as good as we can be. Your help will go a long way in helping us achieve our goals for Reading Community Players. Though there is no way of knowing it from the list of names above, two of our new Board members are teens who attend Berks Catholic High School. Whereas the average age of the Board last season was 40 or so, the new average age is around 30!!

Joseph Majesky, our new Tech Director, is no stranger to RCP; he has worked as part of the tech team on many shows here in the past. Now, however, he's in charge! The enthusiasm and determination that Joe has brought to his position is amazing. With the help of a few peers and some adults, Joe has completely revamped the tech booth. All the shelves are organized and clearly labeled, the sound system has been augmented with new speakers and a general redo, while the lighting system has been upgraded with a new dimmer pack and several new instruments. Excellent work, Joe. Be proud of your accomplishments.

Brian Wachowicz is a senior at Berks Catholic and our new boardsecretary. Although a relative newcomer to RCP, he was part of the tech crew for "To Kill A Mockingbird." Brian has brought enthusiasm and many new ideas and projects to the theatre. He has been Joe's partner in much of the work to improve our tech capabilities. Welcome, Brian. We are so glad to have you be part of the organization.

• **About *Ossian Sweet*, the next production from Reading Community Players** •

The first show in 2012 is a staged reading of a brand new play by Gordon Bennet, a friend of RCP member, Peggy Orner. Gordon's following description of the play will introduce all of you to his original drama.

Historians have become increasingly interested in the saga of Ossian Sweet and his family in Detroit in the 1920's. Sweet, a Negro migrant from Florida seeking a better life in the North, became a medical doctor, married Gladys Atkinson from a middle-class black family, and ultimately bought a "dream house" in a white neighborhood, despite previous attempts by blacks to integrate neighborhoods in a city rife with members of the KKK. They moved into their home, then over two days and nights a mob

READING COMMUNITY PLAYERS

Pennsylvania's Third Oldest Community Theater ... Founded in 1920



gathered, screamed and threw stones, attempting to evict them. The Sweets had secured guns to defend themselves, and in the ensuing pandemonium Ossian's brother Henry fired shots from an upstairs window, killing one white man and wounding another. All were arrested and charged with murder. The bold defense of the Sweets by the renowned defense attorney Clarence Darrow over two trials marks one of the most courageous and pivotal moments in the long struggle of African Americans to secure their civil rights. Indeed, it appears to be the first time in this country that an African-American was acquitted of murder by an all-white jury. As such, it predated and foreshadowed many events and victories that occurred later in the long struggle for civil rights in America.

This two-act play, through compelling story and dialogue, music and projected imagery, engages the audience in a profound way. Gladys Sweet who, in the role of the narrator, opens and closes the play, also plays an important character as Ossian's wife. Ossian leads us through his childhood and some of the experiences that formed his perspective on life then steps into the story "in real time." Technical effects may include visual projections thrown on the backdrop, if the producing team desires: these will enhance the story as it unfolds. Ossian's mother Dora, who loves the old "spirituals," plays a major role with her sweet voice: her songs become a commentary on the action.

ACT I is prologue: the Sweets' family background, the events leading up to that fateful night of September 9, 1925, the events of that night, and the NAACP's appeal to Darrow to anchor the Sweets' defense team. ACT II covers the explosive courtroom action, with an "Afterward" presented by Gladys Sweet and her mother-in-law Dora, who continues to sing haunting spirituals that date back to the slavery era. The term "African-American" will not be found in the dialogue, despite its common usage today. In the twenties both black and white races referred to people with darker skins as "Colored" or "Negroes." With apologies, those terms will be used in this play, with the exception that Clarence Darrow did occasionally use the term "black."

FINAL OBSERVATION: By definition, My Name is Ossian Sweet is a work of fiction, yet an epic docu-drama based on well-researched historical events. Given the strong contingent of both black and white characters, this drama provides an outstanding opportunity for colleges or companies consisting predominantly of one race or the other to work together to produce the play, with positive and harmonious results both on and off-stage.

Please be sure to join the audience at RCP on February 17, 18 or 19 (Lincoln's birthday!) to share in the story of Ossian Sweet!

READING COMMUNITY PLAYERS

Pennsylvania's Third Oldest Community Theater ... Founded In 1920



READING COMMUNITY PLAYERS 2012 SEASON

MY NAME IS OSSIAN SWEET

Directed by Ruth Martelli
February 17, 18, 19

A PIRATES'S LIFE FOR ME

Directed by Debbi Silas
June 22, 23, 24, 29, 30, July 1

LEADING LADIES

Directed by Tara Sands
April 20, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29

GASLIGHT (ANGEL STREET)

Directed by Bruce McLean
August 17, 18, 19, 24, 25, 26

WAR OF THE WORLDS

Directed by Pat Perfect
October 19, 20, 21, 26, 27, 28

www.rcptheatre.org



Reading Community Players
403 North 11th Street
P.O. Box 13425
Reading, PA 19612