

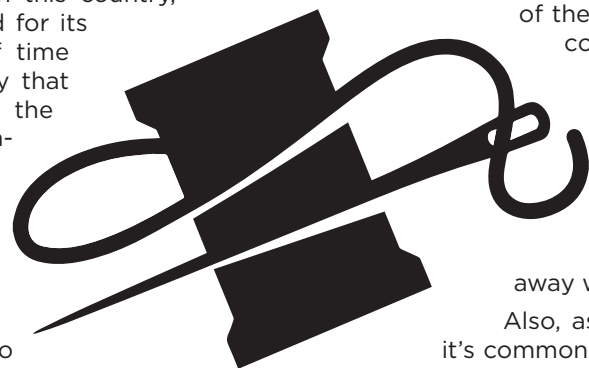
Sewing skills much in demand at local theater companies

In the course of describing her early involvement in sewing, Stephanie Carlson said she doubts that domestic sewing is as popular among young people today.

One can find evidence that in this country, at least, it is not. Reasons cited for its decline range from the lack of time in modern homes for an activity that once was a necessity there to the ready availability of professionally produced clothing across a range of prices.

That said, one also can encounter articles touting the availability of — and necessity for — sewing in at least one place: contemporary theater, to which Stephanie can attest.

Wendy Kaufman who writes for a variety of media and on a variety of subjects blogged recently under the headline, “Sharpen your sewing skills by volunteering at your local theater’s costume shop.”



She leads off the article by describing her extensive involvement in costuming on the East Coast, then tells of moving west and putting her skills to work in children’s theater. She writes enthusiastically of the experience, but also sees how it could benefit anyone desiring to learn or build on sewing skills.

For example, she writes, “Volunteering to costume at your local theater or school is one of the easiest places to start honing your sewing skills. In a nutshell, you can get away with a lot on stage.”

Also, as she notes earlier in the article, it’s common knowledge that the arts — “theater especially — is always tight on the budget. Volunteers are the lifeblood of any theater.”

Stephanie and her colleagues at ACT 1 Theatre also could attest to that as well as coach you in the art of putting needle to thread to cloth.

STEPHANIE

From Page 3

attempt something very different.

Fabrics for the costumes are also selected at this point, taking into consideration the play’s themes and potential color schemes.

At the first read-through of the script, Carlson takes the actors’ measurements and, at that point, costume designs may be influenced by the actors themselves or by the technical challenges that a costume may present.

For example, if a costume must be removed or put on hastily, the choice of zipper, button or snap may come into play.

“Velcro may be the final answer,” Carlson said.

Additional challenges may lie in the number of characters to be costumed and how many clothing variations the script demands for each.

For instance in the current ACT 1 Theatre production of *Blithe Spirit*, there are seven actors, and only one, Elvira, who

plays the deceased wife of writer Charles Condomine, has no costume changes. (She’s dead, you see.)

On the other hand, Madame Arcati, the medium hired by Condomine to bring Elvira back to life for purposes of literary research, dons a variety of colors as she invokes the elements of earth, wind, water and fire during her séances.

In addition to creating and producing costumes for this play, Stephanie will also be stage manager for the theater’s next play, *Treasure Island*. In this way she further replicates her father’s multi-faceted involvement in community theater.

Stephanie opted for a similar broad exposure to the world at-large, studying sociology, anthropology, art and psychology, for example, before graduating from Seattle Pacific University.

Eight years ago she considered returning to school to study pharmacy, but demands at home (including the home-schooling of her three daughters) drew the curtain on that plan.

Inevitably, with Stephanie the many roles she plays come down to family.



ACT 1
Theatre

Studio of Theatrical Arts
5814-152nd Ave. Ct. E., Suite 104*
Sumner, WA 98390

*Next to Fred Meyer Gardening Center

ACT 1 Theatre is a 501(c)3 organization, and all donations are tax deductible



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ACT 1
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AD LIB
Newsletter April 1, 2016



ACT 1 has been a community fixture, but may soon be homeless

By Cliff Rowe

What difference does a theater make to those who occupy it?

It’s an appropriate time to ask that question of those who shared in the arrival of ACT 1 Theatre to Sumner a decade ago and its growth since.

ACT 1 has put its actors on many stages and audiences in front of them in those 10 years.

First off, there was the stage in the downtown Sumner park. Among the plays presented there were *The Tempest* and *Lion and the Mouse*.

A distinctive (and endearing) feature at the park was watching the action and dialogue on stage come to an abrupt halt as a train passing less than a half-block away would sound its horn to alert motorists at the nearby crossing. Actors would halt

in what became known as a train freeze.

Early on, ACT 1 also used the stage at the Elks Lodge on East Main in Puyallup. Audiences there were treated to *Oliver Twist* and *Steel Magnolias*.

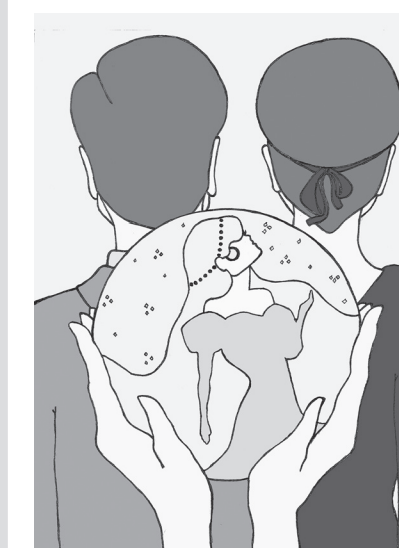
The Old Cannery provided performing areas inside its building on occasion (*Forever Plaid* and *Dracula-The Musical*)

See **THEATRE SPACE**, Page 2

ACT 1 Theatre Presents

Blithe Spirit

by Noel Coward



April 8-10
April 15-17
April 22-24

7^{pm} Fridays & Saturdays
2^{pm} Sunday matinees

Tickets online:

Adults \$15
Students, Seniors, Military \$10

Tickets at the door:

Adults \$20
Students, Seniors, Military \$15

www.Act1TheatreProductions.com

We may be on the move, but that doesn't mean we don't still believe in Sumner or community theater. Check out our new website at: www.act1theatre.org

THEATER SPACE

From Page 1

for example) as well as outside under a tent in the parking lot (*Seven Clever Pirates* and *Schoolhouse Rock*).

To help kick off a fundraiser for the new Gordon Family YMCA, ACT 1 was asked to provide entertainment. It created an original radio script dramatizing a bit of Sumner history, *Stuck Junction*, staged at the former Dieringer School north of Sumner, now owned by Peterson Brothers.

The Liberty Theater in Puyallup was transformed into a forest and a bog, and *Darkness Beckons* came to life.

These stages meant much to the fledgling theater company and all those involved with it.

They provided challenges in adjusting sets to unfamiliar areas, working with variations in the powering of lights and sound, providing space and privacy for costume changes, and innovation in scheduling and marketing of the shows.

They also meant opportunities to boost visibility and to interact with others in the community who share an appreciation for the arts and who are willing to help support an effort to raise another theatrical voice.

Their first brick-and-mortar space was a tiny office directly next to Heritage Park.

In 2011, ACT 1 Theatre became more permanently fixed when it rented warehouse space in the Tarragon property east of the Fred Meyer store, right opposite its garden center. A black-box theater took shape in the ground-floor warehouse, and an apartment above it became "the loft," providing an office, green room, meeting and storage space.

As a theatrical space it, too, has had its pluses as ACT 1 founders Petra and Chris

Karr and many volunteers joined forces to create and steadily improve the stage, backdrops, lighting and seating. They even managed to carve out a concessions area.

The space worked, but it also had its minuses, such as limited overall space and the need for patrons needing to use the restroom to walk outside to a restroom in a nearby warehouse. Then there were the occasional interruptions from those hanging out in the shopping center parking lot or less frequent instances of vandalism to vehicles and buildings.

Even these detractions created opportunities for those involved with the theater to interact with residents from nearby homes on their way to and from shopping. Several of these neighbors shared in keeping a watchful eye on property in the area, and some became heavily involved in building props and scenery. Before the loft was acquired, a neighbor even let the actors use an apartment as a green room.

In all, ACT 1 Theatre staged 22 productions at its black-box theater and even took one of those, *The Fantasticks*, on the road for two performances on a stage at Wesley Homes in Des Moines.

It has two more plays remaining this season, *Blithe Spirit* (April 8-10, 15-17, 22-24) and *Treasure Island* (May 27-29, June 3-5).

Actors young and old have made their acting debuts in an ACT 1 Theatre play on one of the varied stages. And veteran actors have found their way to one or more of these stages, bringing with them their store of theater tradition and their love for it to the benefit of all.

Now comes another transition as Tarragon has announced it is planning major changes to the building currently housing ACT 1 Theatre. Theater space is not included in those plans and exactly when the change will take place no one knows, but ACT 1 will once again be on the move.

THE ACT 1 ROAD SHOW

This is a list of the plays and other productions produced by ACT 1 Theatre on a variety of area stages. The number following each is the number of actors, stage crew and musicians involved in it.

In Heritage Park

- *The Tempest* (10)
- *Godspell Review* (22)
- *Annie/Newsies Review* (24)
- *Grease Review* (19)
- *Lion and the Mouse* (8)

Elks Lodge

- *Steel Magnolias* (9)
- *Soldier Christmas* (17)
- *Oliver* (36)

The Old Cannery (Indoors)

- *Forever Plaid* (10)
- *Beauty and the Beast* (15)
- *Dracula - The Musical* (14)

The Old Cannery (Outdoors)

- *Seven Clever Pirates* (13)
- *Schoolhouse Rock* (13)

Liberty Theater

- *Darkness Beckons* (25)

Old Dieringer School/Peterson Brothers

- *Stuck Junction* (12)

ACT 1 Theatre Black Box

- *Best Christmas Pageant Ever* (26)
- *Children's Hour* (14)
- *Dead Man's Cell Phone* (11)
- *Nunsense* (9)
- *12 Angry Men* (16)
- *Tuna Christmas* (6)
- *Quilters* (17)
- *The Brothers Grimm Spectaculathon* (9)
- *Empowered* (17)
- *Ancestral Voices* (9)
- *Christmas Pudding* (14)
- *Mrs. Packard* (12)
- *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* (8)
- *Emperor's New Clothes/Wonder Lost* (13)
- *Joy to the World* (16)
- *El Patito Feo* (17)
- *Sympathy Jones* (23)
- *Charlie Brown Christmas* (19)
- *Last Five Years* (9)
- *The Fantasticks* (13)
- *Leading Ladies* (13)
- *Mother Goose Tells All* (16)

Coming in April/May

- *Blithe Spirit* (11)
- *Treasure Island* (14)

Her family heritage is tailor-made for working with ACT 1

By Cliff Rowe

Family – past and present – is the thread that has led to Stephanie Carlson's involvement as a prolific volunteer with ACT 1 Theatre.

One end of that thread is anchored with her grandfather and grandmother. He was a master tailor and she a master seamstress. Both provided Stephanie with an appreciation for sewing and nurtured her skill in the craft.

Then came her father whose life was immersed in multiple facets of theater from acting and directing to stage tech.

Not surprisingly, it would seem, that thread led Stephanie to Sumner and her involvement in community theater with ACT 1.

The thread continues to spool out from Stephanie through her three daughters, Elizabeth, age 5, Sophia, age 11, and Jessica age 15. The girls were introduced to ACT 1 through participation with the theater's street-performing Scarecrows. Their mother simultaneously was drawn in through working with the troupe's costumes.

In December, Jessica performed at ACT 1 in *A Charlie Brown Christmas* in



Photo by CLIFF ROWE

Since her three daughters got involved in ACT 1 Theatre, Stephanie Carlson has become hooked herself, acting as an intricate part as seamstress and costumer for the community troupe.

the role of Pigpen and now is performing in the Kentlake High School presentation of *Sound of Music*.

And that again brings Stephanie back into the picture as she sews zippers into 12 dresses for the Kentlake production.

Stephanie says her greatest satisfaction from working as the costumer with ACT 1 comes with taking the visions others have for costumes, combining them with

her own and bringing them all to life.

She says that process most often begins with the first production meeting she has with the director of an upcoming play. The director may put on the table costume ideas that originated in previous versions of the play, or she may want to

See **STEPHANIE**, Page 4