



Μυθιστορίες

Affordable Theater, Inc.

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This newsletter is for members and friends of Affordable Theater, Inc. of Los Altos, California. If you would like to receive a copy of your own, please contact us at musings@affordabletheater.com

Editor

Charlotte Schaefer
charlotte@affordabletheater.com

Designer

Deirdre McGaffey
deirdre@affordabletheater.com

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10 Things You Didn't Know About...

Joel Chandler Harris

(Author of the Uncle Remus stories)

10. In 1948, Walt Disney filmed *Song of the South* at Harris' house in Atlanta and enclosed a portion of the porch on the east side to create a set of a cabin interior.
9. The Uncle Remus stories, beginning with *Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings*, have been translated into twenty-seven different languages.
8. The character of Uncle Remus was based on Uncle George, Old Harbert, and Aunt Crissy; slaves Harris met on a plantation in Putnam County, Georgia.
7. Harris was born in Billy Barne's Tavern, and raised by his mother Mary.
6. He worked for the *Atlanta Constitution* for twenty-five years, beginning in 1879.
5. Harris was the father of nine children.
4. He suffered from a speech impediment, and was too shy to read his own work in public.
3. Not only was he a literary contemporary of Mark Twain, they were also friends.
2. Harris is credited with popularizing the use of native dialects in literature.
1. Harris was white, with red hair...and freckles.

Up and Coming

Auditions

Performance Date:

Tuesday *or* Wednesday afternoon
July 6 or 7, 2004

Auditions:

Wednesday/Thursday 6:30pm-9pm
May 26 and 27, 2004

Rehearsals:

Wednesdays/Thursdays 6:30pm-9pm
May 26, 27; June 2, 3, 9, 10, 16, 17, 23, 24, 30; and
July 1, 2004

Auditions and Rehearsals will be held at the Serra Park stage, 739 The Dalles Ave, Sunnyvale CA.

Map at: <http://tinyurl.com/258bj>

The Play: *Shakespeare 101*

A slight variation of the original script utilizing only four actors, and including the translated Romeo & Juliet scene.

For more information visit

www.affordabletheater.com/sarah/shakespeare101/



Director's Note

The Moral of the Story

A scheming fox, an unflappable tortoise, a hyper-active bunny, and a host of other characters arrived at Carden El Encanto School in Santa Clara for ATI's premier of "The Moral of the Story", the first play in the Storytellers series. "Moral" was warmly received by Carden's 3rd – 5th grade classes. The kids encouraged both the Rabbit and the Tortoise as the two ran their famous race, showed deep concern for the poor, overworked donkey as a mother and daughter learned the dangers of trying to please all of the people all of the time, and laughed as Brer Fox tricked Brer Rabbit into tangling with the tar baby and was, in turn, tricked into letting Brer Rabbit go free again.

The Carden teachers also gave us a warm reception. Talking to the music teacher after the show, she told us that word had already spread across the campus, and teachers who had been unable to attend the show were expressing regret and hoping that they would be able to see future shows for themselves.

On a somewhat different note, I cannot say enough about our fantastic cast. Despite having only nine rehearsals, they put on a great show. Simmi reluctantly invaded the personal space of others and spent two hours in an empty store on the bottom floor of Vallco learning to wrestle a tar baby in order to bring to life one of the most exuberantly over-caffeinated rabbits in literary history. Cheryl and Brianna subdued a remarkably stubborn donkey on their never-ending trip to market. Judy spent many heated hours in a turtle costume built to allow its wearer to survive an arctic winter. And Deirdre not only did a fabulous job of personifying Fable, she also built props and costumes, turning an actor into a fox using only two stuffed animals and a bit of elastic. Many thanks to all of you; you made your director look good.

Finally, my thanks to Vallco Fashion Park in Sunnyvale for providing us with a place to rehearse. Their generosity meant the world to us. Thank you.

Charlotte

Director

The Storyteller Series

Storytellers. We all know one. A person who can make the most mundane occurrences sound like a grand adventure. A trip to the grocery store becomes a daring quest for bread and meat as they regale their listeners with tales of their exploits. These are the same people who make the same old stories new again with each retelling. We worry that Sleeping Beauty's prince might not arrive in time to wake her, and are surprised when the tortoise wins the race. Conversely, we all know an anti-teller. You know, a person who can take make a tale of adventure, love, death, and heroism sound like standing in line at the bank. Affordable Theater's new series of plays is about both of these people.

It's also about the stories themselves. The ones that have become so much a part of our culture that they've crept into our everyday speech: I gotta get home before I turn into a pumpkin, don't count your chickens before they're hatched, long, long ago, in a galaxy far, far away. The ones that first introduced us to the names that have become as familiar as family: Hercules, Snow White, Excalibur.

Beyond these stories, lies a second set. Stories from outside Western culture, each one every bit as important to the people who tell them, as our stories are to us. Other cultures shape and are shaped by their heroes and villains, as surely as we are shaped by ours. Baba Yaga, Sheherazade, Mulan all have their places in the hearts and minds of many.

The stories come in four basic types: myths, legends, fables, and fairy tales. Some teach about morals, some tell the glory of times past, some show us what it means to be a hero in ways both big and small, some simply show us how to stretch our imagination beyond the world we know to see the possibilities beyond reality.

The eight plays in the Storyteller series fall into two categories: Storytellers and Storytellers from Other Lands. Each play explores a type of story. Within each play, narrator or storyteller guides the action, helping or hindering the characters in their attempts to tell each story.

The first play in the series, *The Moral of the Story*, debuted earlier this month. We look forward to laughing and learning our way through the other seven.

Looking to the Future

One of the decisions that ATI will face in the future is whether or not to become a union theater. As ATI was formed to bring theater to everybody, we've decided to remain a non-union house. This decision is based partly on finances and partly on principle.

Being part of the theater union requires that we as a theater do certain things. First and foremost we are required to primarily hire union employees for all open positions. We are required to hold separate auditions for union actors, prior to even announcing the availability to non-union folk. Lastly, we are required to post a bond equal to two weeks salary for every union employee.

The bond issue is the biggest financial burden. In the future, we plan on paying our actors a full-time salary for the time they are working for us. This salary will be paid out of not only our yearly budget, but from the income the individual show generates. The bond requirement means that we must be able to cover the cost of these salaries prior to ever earning a cent from the current show. This would require us to only produce shows we are guaranteed a good return on. As one of the aims of ATI is to produce new shows from unknown authors, this requirement poses a major hurdle.

The additional two requirements of holding private auditions, and only offering first choice on parts to union actors limits not only our ability to hire the best person for the job, but an actors ability to gain experience. To quote Actors' Equity "The Equity card is the symbol of a commitment to a theatrical career and represents the highest standards and responsibilities of professionalism. Those who choose to become members commit to representing the theatre, and themselves, with integrity and dignity."¹ We feel that any actor that is spending their time working on a show, especially in a volunteer capacity is making a commitment to their theatrical career. Whether or not the actor is paying dues to a union has nothing to do with their commitment to represent the theater and themselves with integrity and dignity. How they present themselves shows this, and nothing else.

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¹ Actors' Equity. (2002, Dec 16). "About Equity. A Handbook" [PDF Booklet] http://www.actorsequity.com/library/Misc/aboutequity_booklet.PDF. Pg. 3, 15. (Visited 2004, May)

Looking to the Future (cont.)

Equity further states that “[the union] was founded and is run by members in order to ensure safe and beneficial working conditions and fair remuneration”. ATI does its own work to ensure safe and beneficial working conditions for its volunteers. When the time comes that ATI will be in a position to pay employees, we will also be sure they receive fair remuneration for their work. We don't feel we'll need a union to tell how to run our theater fairly.

For our actors we also feel that becoming a union house would be a disservice. A union actor can only audition for roles deemed (by the union) to be appropriate for the actor; they must pay a yearly due, plus a percentage of their earnings directly back to the union; and in order to work for a non-union house they must receive written permission from the union. We feel that our actors are adults, and should be able to make decisions about their careers by themselves. We would like our actors to be free to audition for, and perform in, any role they are interested in. For actors who are interested in pursuing full time careers in theater, the question of whether or not to join a union will become more pressing. It is a fact that many of the large Broadway houses, and many of the national tours are union. What may not be known is that there are an equal number of productions that are non-union. Network Tours, for example, which is responsible for 'Rent' and 'Cabaret' and 'Suessical' currently only hires non-union employees. ATI is not interested in making decisions for our actors. What we are concerned with is making theater available to the largest audience possible, and making opportunities available to as many actors as possible. By deciding, before it becomes an issue, to not become a union house we are giving our actors the widest choice possible, while at the same time not forcing ourselves into a situation where we must choose shows based on their popularity, and likelihood to bring in large audiences, but for their artistic and entertainment value.

If a person who is part of a union wishes to participate in an ATI performance, they are more than welcome. We hope that everyone who is interested in bringing good theater back to the community, and rekindling the arts in schools will come work on an ATI show.

For more information on the Actors' Equity Association (AEA), please visit: www.actorssequity.org

For more information on Network Tours, please visit: www.networkstours.com

How You Can Help

All contributions, whether goods, services, monies, or time, are deeply appreciated. At the moment, however, our primary need is a home.

To this end we have begun applying for grants. Grants come in many forms, and are found in many different places.

Starbucks' Grants for Giving we discovered while getting our morning coffee. While we found out about the Community Foundation of Silicon Valley while surfing the web. Perhaps you've seen an advertisement for a grant, or your company has a community giving program. Drop us a line, and let us know. Affordable Theater is actively searching for grant funding to augment the private donations you already provide.

Please contact us at giving@affordabletheater.com. Affordable Theater, Inc is a non-profit corporation under tax code 501(c)(3). As such, all contributions qualify you for a tax deduction, as well as our undying gratitude.

Useful Information

New for Actors

In addition to our current email list, which distributes the Musings newsletter, as well as important announcements regarding the theater, we are creating an additional list for our actors. 'ATIactors' is available to anyone who is interested in receiving audition notices.

To sign up, please visit:

<http://lists.affordabletheater.com/mailman/listinfo/atiactors>

