


Call Board

The Amateur Comedy Club Established 1884



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150 East 36th St., NYC, NY 10016

March 2009

Phone 212/685-1032

JITTERS

ACC's Spring Play "Jitters" Sure to Make You Laugh

By Eric Kuzmuk, Chairman
Play Committee

The Play Committee is pleased to announce that our final production for the Amateur Comedy Club's rollicking 125th season, which is scheduled to open on May 4 and run through May 16, will be "Jitters" by David French.

This delightful light farce, loosely compared to "Noises Off," will be directed by our own Bill Brown, and the production manager will be John Nasta. Perfectly suited to our unique company, the comedy essentially is a retelling of the very sorts of things that can occur when we endeavor to put on a show.

All the backstage drama and frantic nuttiness, all the diva-inspired backstabbing and self-doubts, all the forgetting of lines, drunken late arrivals, lost properties, locked bathroom doors, torn costumes, tyrannical stage managers, and costume mistresses with lost pins, the whole retinue of craziness that goes into "puttin' on a show" is herein portrayed.

The leading lady of the play within this play, set at a provincial Canadian theater, is a formerly successful American actress who is desperately trying to make her comeback with this play, written by a novice and about to premiere very, very far from Broadway.

All the players are anxiously awaiting

confirmation that a big-time New York producer, a la "Waiting for Guffman," will attend the opening performance securing the possibility that the new show will be picked up for a run at the bright lights of the Great White Way.

Of course, tempers flare and egos get mangled when the leading man, a local celebrity, has artistic disagreements with his leading lady. The youngest cast member attends a wedding and shows up drunk just before curtain and the oldest character actor is having a devil of time remembering his lines as he cowers in his dressing room fearful to go on.

Unexpectedly all goes far better than expected leading, ironically, to even more frayed nerves thus prompting the director to implore his cast to behave like adults. The response to this from the cast is

emblematic of our beloved ACC when one of the actors exclaims, "We're not adults, we're actors."

It is all a bit of frothy madness and mayhem which will succeed, we hope, in attaining our goal for this season which has been to MAKE YOU LAUGH!

STIM Party Set for April 9

STIM
PARTY
April 9

Since no STIM party is planned for March because of all the activity surrounding other events taking place at the club, mark your calendars for the next party, which is planned for 7 to 9 p.m. on

Thursday, April 9.

The STIM Committee chairmen report that the party will feature light hors d'oeuvres and refreshments, along with plenty of fun and fellowship. For reservations call 212-685-1032 or email us at admin@amateurcomedyclub.org.

Audition Call for "Jitters"

Auditions for "Jitters" by David French will be held at the ACC Clubhouse on Monday and Tuesday, March 23 and 24 from 7 to 9 p.m. Tryouts will consist of reading from sides, and no monologues or other prepared materials are required. Callbacks will be scheduled as necessary. Scripts are available at the club.

Rehearsals, which will begin on Monday, March 30, will take place Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 7 to 10 p.m. Performances will begin on Monday, May 4, and run through Saturday, May 16.

"Jitters," which will be directed by our own Bill Brown, is a comedy that is a "play within a play" about a theater group putting on a new play with hopes of moving it to Broadway. Everything that can go wrong does, to uproarious effect.

There are six male roles and three female roles. Character breakdowns are

as follows:

Patrick Flanagan—late 40s to late 50s, a boisterous, temperamental star of the regional theater scene.

Jessica Logan—late 40s to late 50s, a seductive, ex-Broadway star looking to claw her way back.

Phil Mastorakis—late 30s to early 60s, a neurotic actor looking for his big break on Broadway.

George Ellsworth—early 30s to early 50s, a mercurial theater director.

Robert Ross—mid-20s to early 30s, a neurotic young playwright.

Tom Kent—mid-20s to early 30s, a young actor in his first real play.

Nick—mid-20s to late 30s, a theatrical stage manager who is all business.

Susi—early 20s to early 30s, a sexy theatrical house manager.

Peggy—early 20s to early 30s, the props person, a bit naïve.

Review

“Laughter on the 23rd Floor”

By J. Ned Crabb

Even before it opened, our winter production of Neil Simon’s “Laughter on the 23rd Floor” was a hit—the dress rehearsal on Sunday, Feb. 15, had a packed house, and that audience was exuberant in its appreciation of the play.

This was one of those rare times when the cast was fully prepared before opening night—tight with the cues, ready with speedy delivery and socking the punch lines for every laugh available. From opening night to the closing night, “Laughter” played to full houses and, well, laughter.

For this club triumph we owe especial thanks to our production’s outstanding, enthusiastic (and gentlemanly, I might add) director Steven Petrillo and to the superb actors, carefully selected by Mr. Petrillo, who crackled with energy and comic brilliance throughout the run.

The characters, seven men and two women, are of course given fictional names, but they represent actual people, such as Carl Reiner and Mel Brooks, who were writers in the early 1950s for the Sid Caesar variety television show, which at the time was one of the top three in the nation. “Your Show of Shows” ran for an hour and a half on Saturday nights and had 60 million viewers during its 160 episodes, each of them centered on the comic genius of Sid Caesar, who is 87 this year, and who, though frail, still makes rare public appearances. Carl Reiner is also 87.

A very young Neil Simon was one of Sid Caesar’s writers, and this play is a salute to his immensely talented colleagues, who helped transform the new medium of television from an often boring curiosity into a cultural phenomenon.

Mr. Simon is represented in “Laughter” as Lucas, the sometimes narrator of the play, who has just been hired as a writer for “The Max Prince Show” and must prove himself in the wild, frenetic atmosphere of the “Writers Room” among a group of bizarre, maddening characters.

In our ACC production, Lucas was charmingly portrayed by Ross Jeffcoat. Occasionally breaking away from the action, Lucas addresses the audience to comment on the personalities of the other writers or explain the significance of certain Writers Room rituals. Mr. Jeffcoat handled his role with smooth



Max (Scott Glascock) glowers as Milt (Greg Gerard) papers over wardrobe malfunction while Kevin Roche and Gerry Perlman look on.



Helen (Sophia Bushong) takes damage dictation from Max (Scott Glascock).



Val (Terry Lee Swarts) gets sartorial advice from Brian (Kevin Roche).



Max invokes Lady Liberty for Kenny (Gerry Perlman) and Carol (Jane Brendler Büchi) as Lucas (Ross Jeffcoat) jots notes.

assurance as his character developed from nervous, bemused newcomer to, eventually, one of the “honorary lunatics.”

The other characters enter the Writers Room one by one, brandishing their quirks and neuroses. First is the hyper, flashy Milt, portrayed by Gregory Taft Gerard with his usual comedic skill and gusto. In his performance, Mr. Gerard adroitly hinted at Milt’s underlying unhappiness: Here is a jokester who disparages his own talent and longs to be a suave lady-killer.

Then in comes the constantly anxious head writer Val, marvelously rendered by longtime ACC veteran Terry Lee Swarts, who this time out is sporting a nifty, Borscht-Belt-authentic Russian accent. The accent is a setup for a number of hilarious exchanges between Val and Milt.

Next, Brian, portrayed by Kevin Roche with cynical dash, stumbles through the door, coughing and hacking while smoking a cigarette. Brian is the odd



How do you spell “infarction?”—Ira (Stephen Heiden) averts coronary via gastric bypass; Milt, Kenny and Lucas ventilate accordingly.

man out ethnically (the only gentile of the writers’ group) and psychologically (he is constantly trying to break out on his own), and Mr. Roche gave an exacting depiction of a mocking, what-the-hell-do-I-care-about-all-this dreamer.

Next through the door is urbane, well-tailored Kenny, rendered by the always-excellent Gerry Perlman with a perfect melding of wisecracking sophistication. With his dark horn-rims, Errol Flynn mustache and deft movements, Mr. Perlman portrayed perfectly a snappy, quick-thinking 1950s funnyman.

Jane Brendler Büchi, a tall, auburn-haired lady with sterling stage presence,

Photography: Kaoru Bobienko and John Nasta

sweeps through the door after Kenny—she is Carol, the only female writer on the show, who is breaking into a male-dominated world where every third word is ---- or ----. Ms. Büchi was truly hilarious as she flounced about the room simultaneously slinging wisecracks and trying to browbeat the men into taking national events (McCarthy witch hunt, etc.) seriously. Later in the play, she was wonderfully funny as a painfully pregnant Carol who still can't help making jokes while she's suffering.

At this point, the writers are tense, wondering where Max is. Suddenly, Max, played by the splendidly comic ACC veteran Scott Glascock, burst through the door ranting about the network and their constant memos. Like a tiger wearing a fedora, he circles around and around the table where the writers are gathered, snarling and gesticulating. From his first hilarious appearance onward, Mr. Glascock nailed this role to the barn door with a memorably antic, side-splitting performance.

As Helen, the perpetually perplexed secretary, Sophia Bushong was just simply dandy. Her wide-eyed double-takes, as her character struggles to figure out what the hell is going on around her, were priceless. She was particularly funny in two scenes: When Helen makes a disastrous attempt at making a joke and when she deflects the advances of a suddenly ardent Milt.

And then comes Ira.

Blasting through the door with an explosion of anxiety and frantic pleas for medical help, yelling that he is having either a heart attack or stroke or possibly both, this outrageous hypochondriac brings everything to a halt. The others just stare at him, for this is his usual maddening routine. Stephen L. Heiden has always been one funny fellow in his comedy roles, but as Ira he managed a tour de force. If we had an ACC comedy class, we surely would include a film clip of Mr. Heiden's Ira progressing from choking, wild-eyed fear to sudden fierce concentration to gradual joy as he avoids a supposed heart seizure by passing gas.

"Laughter's" production values were first-rate. Costume designer Janice O'Donnell brought the 1950s look to delightful, authentic life with the wonderful outfits she devised for the actors. Brian Nelson—actor, director, artist, writer—designed the Writers Room with exacting, period-perfect detail. It was a truly marvelous set.

Sound designer Larry Taylor added a lot of fun to the show with his selection

of '50s songs; and there were also the usual stage bits of telephone rings and noises off. Lighting by Gordon Stanton was just right in mood and feel.

Loud huzzahs, a standing ovation and homburgs tossed into the air for director Steven Petrillo, the fabulous cast and the production crew, with special hat tips to assistant director Ted Cubbin, production manager Michael Printz, stage manager Cyrus Newitt, props managers Yale Schnader and James Hamilton, wardrobe manager June Briggs and house manager Kevin Gregory.



JOHN SHANNON and the St. George's Society set the pace for this month with a brilliant event at the National Arts Club on Gramercy Park. We enjoyed sample scenes from several British-inspired off-Broadway plays all of which were worth having a closer look at. Following a brief question-and-answer period we mingled with actor extraordinaire JIM DALE along with ROD O'CONNELL, LAUREN SILBERMAN and JUNE and DONALD BRIGGS.

The Snarks kept things rolling along with their 100th anniversary party held at the Clubhouse late in January. We went as "Mr. Doran Mullen and guest" because Doran is in "PB." Not only was there a generous bar, several tables groaning full of yummy Snarkables, mounds of passed hors d'oeuvres and over 100 of New York's finest personalities to mingle amongst, but we also enjoyed a fine entertainment which MAGGIE SCHNADER informs us was directed by our beloved LEE BURNLEY. Lee tells us that CHERYL CHALMERS found this snippet of Snarchivia, much as KEVIN ROCHE discovered "The Jilt," and brought it back to life. "The Snarks Unlimited," (author unknown) was originally written and performed for the 21st anniversary and in this revival starred CHERYL CHALMERS, CATHY SCHAEFFER, MARISA ALFORD, ALICE LUSTIG, JOAN SCAFARELLO, HOPE RYDEN, REGINA LUSTIG, CAROLYN HERRICK and FREDERICA NEFF. We understand it played a part in inspiring the upcoming Snark Spring Show by the same name. You know it is just too, too bad that the word Snark has gotten such a bad connotation of late, with whole books being written on the subject,

because our sisters sure know how to satisfy the inner Clubby which makes Snark a very happy word for us.

We finessed the football extravaganza, hoping someone would send in a picture, on the fear that the Stack-o-vision super connection may not have been water-tight, a fear alas unfounded. Then RYAN WEDDLE gathered his dive bar boys at the Galway Hooker, a somewhat scandalous name for a big barn of a place, and recounted his plans to become something of a Navy Spook by entering an extensive training program. JOHN NASTA, JUDY BLISS, HERB GOULD, BRIAN BLAKE, JERE PATTERSON, TOM HILLS and EAMON WOOD joined us there. After a beer or two we schlepped across East 36th to the Clubhouse for the second 2009 STIM. Now this is where being an ACC Associate member has its privileges because at the STIM the food was better, the booze was flowing and there was superb entertainment and we don't mean just STIMEister RAY LUSTIG Major doing his commercial interludes. HERB GOULD recited gobs of Shakespeare and CORKY ROMASH sang some torch songs a cappella. We greeted BARBARA SOBIER, JOHN HILLIARD, REET VARNIK, MARGARET KENNEDY, ROD O'CONNELL, BERNICE HELLER, RICHARD HOOPER, BILL KENNEDY, KAYVAN (pronounced like Avon) FREEMAN, MARYELLEN CONROY, ALICE TIMOTHY and ROBERTA SATRO amongst the intimate attendees and then peeked in on the rehearsals for "Laughter on the 23rd Floor."

JEREMY STRIFFLER has been bouncing about Rome these days where he is studying for his MBA, the lucky sot. We're just green...green! ERIC PURCELL turns up in some of the juiciest passages of "Fool's Paradise: Players, Poseurs and the Culture of Excess in South Beach" by Steven Gaines, which was just reviewed by The Times. Eric, this is an instance when one recites the mantra, "when in showbiz no publicity is bad publicity," over and over again. ED FRANKLIN, KIKI BLACK and LORRAINE DAVIDSON availed themselves of some of the treasures we offered by way of closing down our uptown home. We spotted EAMON WOOD and the lovely ASHA TALWAR promenading down Broadway on the glorious Saturday of President's Day weekend. We read "Arcadia" at the English-Speaking Union with LORREE TRUE and her husband JEFF and can honestly claim a better understanding of the text as a result. We spotted LAUREN SILBERMAN at

the E-SU with the Winston Churchill Society when "Warlord," a new biography of Churchill, was the topic of the evening.

ALICE LUSTIG was one of the over 100 guests who attended DORAN MULLEN's President's Day weekend party at his Palm Beach apartment. DAVID and MICHELLE DYNAK were in Las Vegas and it stayed there. YASUKO HARA is still very much tied up in tea, having founded "Yasuko Cha No Yu" at the New York Go Center, 323 East 52nd St., where she teaches the Omotesenke way of tea since just last year. STU CHAMBERLAIN tells us that the Writers Guild party was a good one this year. BILL BROWN et famille traveled the wilds of South Africa, which has us beyond green to chartreuse.

RAY LUSTIG Minor hosted a special Social To Improve Membership and enticed a whole better class of people to attend but we enjoyed a very fancy dinner party with RITA CHEREN that evening and thus missed it. Lastly we attended the first Saturday night performance of "Laughter on the 23rd Floor" and are pleased to say it was brilliant. We learned that a dozen of RAY LUSTIG Major's Georgetown College theater alum recruits along with seven from Holy Cross and one from Wisconsin had enjoyed the first Friday fizz party the night before. We should have been there. That is quite a haul, so now let the conversion process begin... way to go, Ray.

Do try to mix with a better class of people, won't you? With all these foreclosures of troubled assets chasing people out of their homes these days, vagabondery could be becoming a chic

March 2009						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4 WORK NIGHT	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
- S n a r k s -						
15 -Snarks-	16	17	18 WORK NIGHT	19	20	21
22	23	24 Auditions—"Jitters" 7-10 PM	25 WORK NIGHT	26	27	28
29	30	31	WORK NIGHT			

new way of life. However, someone who has moved to a new residence of late may not be showing signs of vagrancy but may quite well have carpe'ed the diem and seized a superior opportunity from the ruins of a ruined bank. Sitting like an old lump in a "permanent residence" may not be a sign of high social standing but merely of simple laziness to move on when the movin's good... don't you think or don't you ?

April 2009						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1 Work Night	2	3	4
5	6	7	8 Work Night	9 STIM	10	11
12	13	14	15 Work Night	16	17	18
19	20	21	22 Work Night	23	24	25
26	27	28	29 Work Night	30	31	



Amateur Comedy Club

150 East 36 Street
New York, NY 10016

Parting Shot:

Look for this trophy of the '09 Winter Major on the Green Room wall next time you're at the Club. Plaque caption submissions being accepted.



The Call Board looks great in COLOR— so get it online! Call Scott and ask how!

Club Administrator Scott Glascock— 212.685-1032