The 2017 Season Has Been Cast

Notes from Raymond Caldwell, Festival Artistic Director

A fter watching almost 2,000 actors audition either in person or online, the 26 positions in this year’s Acting Company are finally filled. Of the 12 males, five of them are familiar faces, having acted for TSF before; and of the five females, four are alumni. All nine members of the Intern Acting Company are new to us.

Those who are returning are as follows: Matthew Simpson, Jason Richards, Micah Goodding, Rick Higginbotham, Julian Gordon, Meaghan Simpson, Lisa Wipperling, Grace Abele, and Lea DiMarchi. Matthew will be playing the role of Christian in Cyrano de Bergerac; Micah Goodding will take on Richard in Richard III; Jason Richards will portray Dogberry in Much Ado about Nothing; and both Rick Higginbotham and Julian Gordon, who was an Intern last year and an actor in this year’s Roadshow, will play a variety of roles in the three plays mentioned. Meaghan Simpson is playing Beatrice in Much Ado; Grace Abele and Lisa Wipperling are cast as two of the four singers in The Marvelous Wonderettes and will play roles in the other shows as well; and Lea DiMarchi, who was an Intern last summer, will play Roxane in Cyrano de Bergerac and also be part of the Wonderettes quartet.

It is always a joy to welcome Company members who have never been to East Texas before, but it is a special pleasure to say “Welcome Home” to those who return. Overall, I am quite enthusiastic about the talent that is scheduled to appear on our stage this season, and we have already told every member of the 2017 Company to be prepared for your heart-warming reception and loving Southern hospitality.

The UpStairs Black Box Show for 2017

For the past three years, Jennifer Burke’s portrayal of American poet Emily Dickinson in The Belle of Amherst has been a delightful, moving, inspiring, and beautifully artistic event. Many of our patrons saw her performances for three consecutive years. This season, Jennifer and we agreed that a fourth year may not continue to draw sufficient audiences, so the TSF Staff was left with a challenge – what play to produce that would have a very small cast, require virtually no scenery, minimal lighting and props, and somehow fit into the Festival’s goals and its rehearsal schedule. Almost all of our Acting Company must be cast in three main shows, and the Intern Company must begin rehearsing the children’s show immediately after the main shows open, so it would be a challenge to have more than three or four actors in the UpStairs show without hiring additional actors. We also do not want to have performances UpStairs that conflict with performances in the Van Cliburn Theater if we can avoid it. That means whatever show we do UpStairs needs to have matinee performances only unless we schedule one or two on Tuesday or Wednesday evenings. All in all, finding a play to substitute for Jennifer’s one-woman play became a major problem or, as we say in the TSF offices, “an opportunity for excellence.” That said, (switching into personal mode here) I have reluctantly decided to direct a play I wrote many years ago that contains only four characters and requires no specific set and minimal costumes. It was originally a very short play that I directed using my Kilgore High School students, and we advanced to the State level of competition in the UIL One-Act play contest. The play is called Did You Hear Thunder? and I have revised it considerably since 1968, yet when people ask me “What is it about?” I find it hard to give a satisfactory answer – so hard, in fact, that I am still unsure about producing it again. I fear that our loyal patrons and friends will sit respectfully in the audience (IF they risk buying a ticket), only to leave saying to themselves and each other, “Well … that was interesting …but what was it ABOUT?” I hesitate to offer an interpretation, but it is a
TSF Roadshow at Odessa’s Globe Theater

The seven actors in the Roadshow, TSF’s Educational Outreach Program, recently completed their 2017 tour, which included multiple performances of Romeo and Juliet, The Princess and the Players, and Shakespeare’s Greatest Hits for public schools in East Texas, the Dallas-Fort Worth area, Houston, and San Antonio, among other Texas towns. But the highlight of their five-week residency was a five-day engagement in Odessa in West Texas, where they had the privilege of being the first to perform a Shakespearean play at the Globe of the Great Southwest in more than a decade. Randy Ham, who heads up the Odessa Council of Art and Culture, and who invited the Roadshow to come there, was effusive in his enthusiasm and gratitude, promising to invite them back again next year. In his words, “I am so impressed with what TSF has done; I intend to steal everything I can from you!” Congratulations to Matthew, Meaghan, Jason, and Meghan on producing the fantastic 2017 Roadshow!

Intern Sponsors Still Needed

For the past two years, members of the TSF Guild and others have answered the call to “Sponsor an Intern” by donating $250 to supplement their meager salary of $1,250 for their 10-week contract with the Festival. The interns are the lowest-paid members of the Festival, receiving $125 per week, which is considerably below the national minimum wage. They also do not receive any assistance with their travel, so in some cases, an intern may easily spend virtually all of his/her entire TSF salary just to get to Kilgore and back home again, depending on where he or she lives. Last year, there was a total of 23 interns in the Company, and within two weeks of the request, all of the interns had been sponsored by TSF patrons! Thank you all very much! This summer, all but four of the Interns have already been sponsored, and it is virtually certain that soon after this newsletter is received and read by Guild members, those four interns will also find sponsors. If you are interested in helping this way, please send a check for $250 to one of the following addresses:

Raymond Caldwell
TSF
1100 Broadway
Kilgore, TX 75662
or
TSF Foundation
PO Box 2788
Kilgore, TX, 75663

Please mark the check “TSF Intern,” and your donation will automatically be applied to an Intern’s salary. Your name will be listed in the Season Playbill beside the photo and biographical sketch of your Intern as well as on the hallway display of their photograph and on a special page titled “Intern Sponsors.” You will be sent the name and contact information for the intern you are helping, and in turn, your intern will receive your name and information, unless you wish to remain anonymous. In that case, please indicate “Anonymous” on a note enclosed with the donation. Thank you very much!

Buying Tickets, Renewing Guild Membership, and Making Donations Online

You already know that you can join the Guild or renew your Guild membership on the Festival website www.TexasShakespeare.com, and many of you have already been purchasing your tickets there as well. Festival staff are working with Tix.com, the online ticket office service company, to make it possible for Guild members to buy tickets online before they become available to the general public in order to reduce the long lines and congestion at the ticket office during the two or three days in May when Guild and Foundation Board members have traditionally bought their tickets early. Festival staff has set up a passcode for Guild members to use that allows them to buy tickets online beginning May 1. The passcode is “TSF32” (without the quotation marks), and it will expire on May 8, after which time anyone will be able to order tickets.

So go to the website and study the performance calendar as soon as you can, since the hard-copy ticket mailer may be mailed out to patrons as late as April.
It's exciting to realize that the TSF Company will ALL be here by May 21. All 93 will be checked in and ready to hit it!

There are many ways Guild volunteers can welcome and host our wonderful cast and crew members while they are in Kilgore. The East Texas hospitality they enjoy is unique and a highlight of their TSF experience.

**Welcome Totes—Wednesday—May 10**

On May 10 the totes will be stuffed and made ready for the Company’s arrival. Each company member will receive a TSF-branded tote bag stuffed with items they use while living in the dorm. Guild dues buy the totes, but we need help in providing the “stuffing.” The Company especially appreciates toilet tissue and laundry pods. In fact, volunteers will stock the “Yoric’s Closet” throughout the season with these items (since we will have used up the budget already by then). Listed below are the items needed for the Welcome Tote. If you have (or can help us purchase) any of these items, call Gem or Eileen for pick-up, or deliver to the Festival Center before May 10.

Items for Totes: highlighters, pens, laundry soap/pods, toilet tissue, travel size handy wipes, discount cards, movie passes.

Poor Yoric’s Closet welcomes gifts of toilet tissue and laundry pods throughout the summer and keeps on the shelves travel-size toiletries of shampoo, conditioner, bath soap and toothpaste donated by Guild members.

**Company Welcome Dinner—Monday—May 22, 5:30 p.m.**

The Back Porch in Kilgore will again be the scene of the Welcome Dinner. Guild dues pay for Company members. All Guild members are invited but asked to pay their own way. The meal will be a hamburger buffet. Guild members who attend are also asked to bring take-away dessert; two-dozen homemade cookies packaged in 6 zip lock bags containing 4 cookies per bag. We will need a Guild attendance count, so please RSVP to either Gem or Eileen.

**Design Presentation—Monday—May 22, 7 p.m.**

At the Van Cliburn Auditorium in the Anne Dean Turk Center, TSF directors and designers will present their interpretation, staging, costuming and lighting concepts for the four main-stage shows.

**Behind the Scenes Tour—Sunday—June 11, 3-5 p.m**

Convene at the Festival Center, 815 Houston St. in Kilgore to meet the technicians who create the magic. You will see into the workings of the costume and prop shops at the Festival Center; then on to the Van Cliburn Auditorium where sets, lighting and sound are being created.

RSVP: kimmacedo@netzero.com or claudiam@eastex.net
Company Events 2017

Adopt-an-Artist—Tuesday—May 23 to Saturday—July 29—your venue

This is your time for a one-on-one visit. Guild members can invite two or more company members to dinner or lunch. If you want to know the artists as individuals, this is a great way. Having them in your home or taking them out to a restaurant is equally appreciated. Chili’s in Kilgore will participate again in Give–Back—Tuesdays whereby they donate a percentage of what you spend if you identify your table as supporting TSF. Call John Dodd, 903-983-8119.

Lunch Bunch— Wednesday—May 24 to Sunday—July 30, Festival Center, Kilgore

Volunteers are needed to bring “extras” for at least 20 people on each Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. Your dues provide breakfast every day. For these three Guild lunches each week, your dues provide sandwich and salad basics (including green salad and fruits). But—we love to show our East Texas hospitality with extras provided by volunteers. You don’t have to cook; extras can come from carry-out or the grocery store.

By extras we mean:
hearty salads (such as potato, pasta, fruit, taco)
dips/crackers/chips
sides that do not have to be cooked or reheated since the TSF Center does not have an oven (such as a pre-cooked casserole, a pot of veggies, a pan of beans, cornbread, or something in a crock pot -- use your imagination)
desserts

Approximately 80 company members come to lunch on Guild days. If 3-4 people volunteer to bring for 20, then no one Lunch Bunch volunteer has to provide everything. We keep up with the schedule and let you know what others are bringing—or you can recruit friends. For information or to coordinate days and times, call, email or text Gem or Eileen.

Changeover Meals—Thursday—June 29 to Saturday—July 29, Van Cliburn Auditorium, Kilgore

A crew of 30 company members work the open set-changeovers between matinee and evening shows on Thur., Fri., Sat. and Sun. They don’t have time to join the other company members at the campus cafeteria for dinner. The Guild feeds them with specified donations of $150 per day. If you want to contribute to this special fund, your help is needed and welcome. If you want to sponsor one or more days, we would be grateful. Or, if you’d like to bring home-cooked or carry-out meals to the hard-working crew around 6:00 p.m., that is also welcome. Call John Dodd, 903-983-8119.

Strike Dinner—Monday—July 31

Although it seems far away, saying goodbye always arrives before we are ready. You are invited to make the Strike Dinner a success by bringing a dish for the pot-luck event. The Guild provides the meat entrée. Be sure to mark it on your calendar!

And again—many, many thanks for all that your Guild membership contributes to the TSF season!
Silk Flowers Sought

Even though it’s only April, materials are already being gathered to create this summer’s productions both big and small. If you have or would like to purchase silk or plastic flowers to donate to the Festival, please contact Raymond or bring them to the Festival Center. Only spring or summer flowers are wanted—no fall, Christmas, etc. and no vines or garlands—just brightly colored single flowers or those bunched together. There will have to be enough to cover the floor of the UpStairs black box theater space for the summer production of Did You Hear Thunder? So hundreds will be needed. If you would like to help “carpet” the UpStairs for this production, gather ye (fake) rosebuds, etc. and donate to the Festival.

Raymond’s contact info.
Office: 903-983-8117; Cell: 903-261-4479
Email: rcaldwell@texasshakespeare.com

Our Chinese Friends Will Return

For the ninth consecutive year, Steve Zhang and Angelina Gaoya are coming back to Kilgore and to TSF to bring a group of Chinese university students and a few of their professors for a three-week workshop to learn more about American Regional Theater production of Shakespeare. They will attend classes, attend rehearsals of the children’s show, shadow TSF artists to learn what they do and how to do it, then rehearse and perform an original work, written and directed by Steve entitled Fabulous. According to Angelina, their original play concerns the world’s obsession with haute couture and the pervasive influence the fashion industry has had on our contemporary society, especially in China. We are very happy to have our Chinese friends return, and we also appreciate the warm welcome the TSF family has shown them since 2009. The “Chinese Theater Night” performance is scheduled for Tuesday, July 25, at 7:30 PM. There will be a light reception after the performance in the lobby of the theater. Admission is free, but reservations are required. The TSF Ticket Office telephone number is 903-983-8601 after May 25.

Did You Hear Thunder?

Company, continued from page 1

play about our solitary journey through Life – confusion and loneliness of trying to find connections when we are young, then the frustrations and aloneness of understanding Life’s meaning and purpose as we grow old. I like to think of Thunder as a prose-poem, an expression of feelings, and a plea for mutual acceptance and understanding. Admittedly, it is a personal, though abstracted, recounting of my life and experiences. So I am nervous about sharing it with everyone.

Did You Hear Thunder? has had four previous productions in Kilgore (some directed by students); a thesis production at Texas State University; one capstone-project student production in Arkansas; productions in Philadelphia and Washington DC at a small professional theater; and a student production near Houston. In the spring of 1968, as the Kilgore High School entry in the UIL One-Act Play Contest, it garnered nine acting awards, including two for Best Actress. In those days, there were only three levels of competition – district, regional, and state, and only one play advanced from each contest. Today, there can be as many as six levels of competition, and three plays advance from each contest.

Thunder runs approximately 90 minutes without an intermission. Jennifer Burke will play “Woman,” and Jason Richards will play “Man.” The other two characters, “Boy” and “Girl” will be played by Intern Actors.

The Witch of Pickle Patch

Jason Richards is writing his fifth original play for young audiences to be premiered by the Festival this summer. Even though the script is still incomplete, he has revealed the title, which is The Witch of Pickle Patch. All we have been able to pry from his creative and mischievous brain is that it involves a witch and a pickle patch! Most of you know that Jason is a graduate of Hallsville High School and Kilgore College with a BFA in theater from Baylor and an MFA from the University of Nebraska. He is a seasoned alumnus of TSF, having worked as an acting intern while he was a KC student, then as the Roadshow director, an assistant to the Managing Director, an actor in the Acting Company for several seasons, a former Kilgore College theater instructor and director, and our resident playwright. Jason is currently the Artistic Director of Artsview Children’s Theater in Longview. His play The Princess and the Players, after premiering at TSF two years ago, has already been produced in New York City and was one of the three shows in this spring’s TSF Roadshow. Hallsville High School, Kilgore College, and TSF are proud to call Jason one of our own.

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Join the Green Group—for Three Reasons

If you have not yet joined the "Green Group" by signing up to receive The Stratford Tribune newsletter via email rather than through regular postal service, please consider doing it today for three reasons: (1) it saves the Guild substantial cost in printing and postage; (2) it allows you to receive a greatly enhanced version of the newsletter, including full-color pictures; and (3) it includes you on the Festival's email list, which lets you receive more timely notifications of many TSF activities. And there is a fourth reason, too: it saves trees!

We are dividing the TSF Green Group into two specific groups.

- **Green Group**—You will receive the TSF newsletters only via email.
- **Green Group Plus**—You will receive the TSF newsletters via email and occasional correspondence about Festival activities. Examples of these might be info about the Lunch Bunch, TSF Foundation, raffles, and special TSF events, and so forth. These emails might be informative or request help with events, etc. and will not be excessive. **We do not share your email address with other entities.**

When you join the Green Group, please let us know your choice—**Green Group** or **Green Group Plus**.

To join either Green Group, send an email to LoisKnouse@letu.edu. Please be sure to include your name. Sometimes it is difficult to identify you by your email address.

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Roadshow Welcome Dinner Hosted by TSF Guild Board

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2016—2017 Executive Board

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