

The Art of Recycling

Thornton Wilder, the author of *The Matchmaker*, of *Our Town* and *The Skin of Our Teeth*, knew the value of borrowing a great idea and reusing it in a new way in a new work. Most artists know this, and most do it in one way or another. All creation, of any kind, is a matter of using what exists and rearranging it or recombining it in some new form. Originality really consists of rearrangement in a way no one has done before. A great idea deserves to be reused and offered up again.

In another context, this might be considered theft; in art, it is thought of as “paying homage.” Brilliant ideas may be reused from another era or another culture and given new life for a new generation or a different nation. Although his innovation for *Our Town*, presented on an essentially bare stage with minimal or no setting, was revolutionary in American commercial theatre of 1938, it was an idea he had “lifted” from Japanese theatre, and it had been used by Shakespeare hundreds of years before. Actors could create the setting with their words, and audiences were capable of using their imaginations – no set required.



In his next work, *The Merchant of Yonkers*, written only months after *Our Town* opened in New York, Wilder borrowed liberally from many other sources. Wilder acknowledged that his play

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Meet the New Staff

James Bianchi, General Manager

James has many years of business experience. He worked most recently at Credit-Suisse as the Coordinator of Investor Reporting. Prior to that, he worked in the bio-medical consulting division at IBM and, before that, in the executive offices of W.R. Grace & Co. During his time with Grace, he was involved with President Reagan’s Private Sector Survey of government expenditures, authoring letters for the signature of the Chairman and making appearances as part of its Speakers Bureau. During this time, he was also pursuing his love for theatre and has appeared in off-off-Broadway venues. As a member of the Royston Theatre Company, he performed many classical roles, including Prospero in *The Tempest*, Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice*, and the Earl of Warwick in Shaw’s *St. Joan*. He also worked with Survivor Productions and the Art and Work Ensemble. At Unity Theatre, he has been seen in his one-man Mark Twain show and most recently, as Mr. Manningham in *Angel Street*. James is the co-author of *Red, Hot and Cole!* a “musical party” based on the life and music of Cole Porter.

Clayton Phillips, Production Manager

Clayton is the recipient of the 2007 New Hampshire Theatre Award for Best Direction of a Musical, Best Musical and Best Original Script, for the world premiere of John Pielmeier’s *Slow Dance with a Hot Pick-Up*, with music by Matty Selman, and also received the 2006 Award for professional excellence. He has served as Producing Artistic Director for The Barnstormers Theatre and Managing Director for the award winning York Theatre in New York City. He directed tours of *Show Boat* (nominated for American Theatre Award as Best Direction and Best Musical), and *Kiss of the Spider Woman* which he also directed in Tokyo and Buenos Aires, as well as North Shore Music Theatre. Clayton was Harold Prince’s Assistant for *Kiss of the Spider Woman* and *Parade*. Other directorial credits in New York and regionally include: *Christmas Carol Rag*, *Gypsy*, *Our Town*, *Of Mice and Men*, *The Apple Tree*, *The Last Five Years*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *Dirty Blonde*, and *Breaking Legs*, among others. Clayton served as a Production Stage Manager for several Broadway

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was “freely adapted” from a German play of 1842 by Johann Nestroy, *Einen Jux will er sich Machen* (roughly, “He will have a good time”), which was itself based on an earlier 1835 British comedy by John Oxenham, entitled *A Day Well Spent*. Among some of the alterations Wilder made for his version was the introduction of the character Dolly Levi, a woman of many talents, including arranging the lives of others in matrimony. Dolly herself had been borrowed from the French playwright Molière’s *L’avare* (*The Miser*), with Wilder lifting whole scenes directly from this source. No, it’s not stealing, it is *homage*. Unfortunately, Wilder’s play was a dismal failure, lasting only a total of 39 performances.

Then, in 1951, Ruth Gordon, who was looking for a starring vehicle for herself, suggested to Wilder (whom she called “Thornie”)

that *The Merchant of Yonkers* might work if he rewrote it with her in mind for the role of Dolly, a role which she had actually turned down in 1938. Under the direction of Tyrone Guthrie, with a British cast and a new title, *The Matchmaker* opened first in Edinburgh and later in London’s West End to great success.

In 1955, most of the London cast arrived in New York, and Ruth Gordon had another triumph in the part to add to an already stellar career. The show ran for 486 performances, the longest Broadway run of any of Wilder’s plays.

Of course, the story doesn’t end there. A film was made of the play in 1958, starring Shirley Booth as Dolly, and featuring Shirley MacLaine and Anthony Perkins. And then, in 1960, David Merrick saw the musical potentials of the play, and with Jerry Herman writing the songs and Michael Stewart reworking the script, they launched the pre-Broadway tryouts of a show entitled *A Damned Exasperating Woman*.

That title didn’t last, and by the time the musical opened in New York in 1964, it had been renamed, *Hello, Dolly!*

Meet the New Staff

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and touring companies including: *Gigi*, *Dancin’*, *Starlight Express*, *Jerome Robbins’ Broadway*, *Aspects Of Love*, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *Candide*, and *Parade*.

Kathleen Whatley, Costume Shop Manager

Kathleen has a background in community theatre from Center Stage in Austin. She has worked “both sides of the boards” in such favorites as *What the Butler Saw*, as assistant stage manager; *Born Yesterday*, as costumer and dresser; and *Little Mary Sunshine*, working in a front-of-house position. She has also worked as both performer and costumer on *Camelot*; hair, makeup, costumes, and a performer in *South Pacific*; and as a performer in *Two Gentlemen from Verona* and *Kiss Me Kate*. As the mother of four girls, she found it necessary to take to her sewing machine again to keep them in prom dresses and costumes for Halloween and school plays.

Tammy Diehl, Box Office Manager and Volunteer Coordinator

Tammy is a native of Helena, Arkansas, and holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Marketing from Arkansas State University. She first settled in Springfield, Missouri, but relocated to the Houston area in 1996. She was married a year later and became a realtor shortly thereafter. Although recently divorced, she claims two kids, “tri-colored and 4-legged,” named Rascal and Belle. She is



Pictured above, (back row, left to right) Judy Grimm, James Bianchi, Kathleen Whatley; (front row) Clayton Phillips, Tammy Diehl

presently living in Hempstead, but is looking for a good rental, perhaps a 2/2 in the Brenham area. A fenced yard is a must.

Judy Grimm, Administrative Assistant

Judy is a long-time resident of Brenham, with family ties to people that helped to build and grow the community. She has a vast office and business administration background in insurance and banking. She recently retired from Germania Insurance after 30 years of service, and is now a part-time staff member at Unity Theatre. She loves animals and enjoys her dogs, as well as interacting with other animal lovers. She also enjoys cooking and working in her yard.

UNITY THEATRE REFLECTIONS

A publication for the curious theatre-goer. Fall 2009

**“Rumor travels faster,
but it don't stay put as long as truth.”**

~ Will Rogers

One of our goals this season is to develop new means of communicating with our subscribers.

- **This newsletter** is designed to enrich your theatre experience by offering in-depth articles about the production process and our professional artists. We will also share information regarding our financial status and ways that we are working to balance our budget and maintain fiscal responsibility. (See the statistics at the bottom of this page.)
- **We have added a new reception area** off the main lobby

that offers you a welcoming environment to come in to “set a spell,” have a cup of coffee and find out what’s going on at your theatre.

- **We will be using a new email format** called “Constant Contact” that will allow us to shoot you quick little reminders about your ticket reservations, describe new volunteer opportunities, and announce upcoming special events. Make sure we have your email address—be assured that we do not share this information, and you can easily remove yourself from mailings at any time.
- **We are introducing “The Players Club,”** a show time opportunity to mix and mingle with other subscribers and meet the actors after the show. Purchase a membership for only \$30 and enjoy this *exclusive* privilege on Friday and Saturday nights of every event in the season.

979-830-8358

Ticket Office

Monday – Friday

10:00 am until 2:00 pm

Use this number only to conduct ticket-related business.

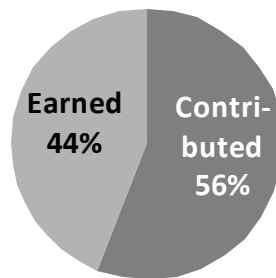
979-830-1460

Administration

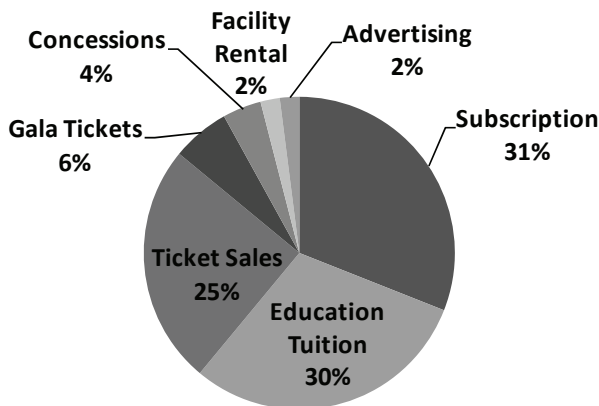
Monday – Friday

9:00 am until 5:00 pm

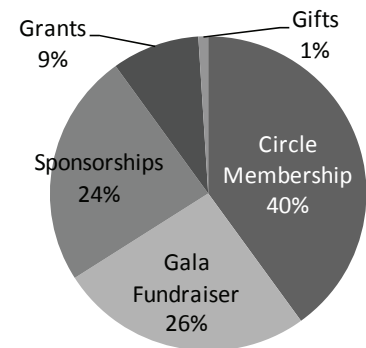
At this number a receptionist will answer your questions, transfer you to another extension, help you find a staff member.



**2009-2010
Income Budget**



Earned



Contributed

Be a Player, Join the Players Club



After a Unity Theatre show, there are few options for performers who would like a place to relax and unwind. Subscribers who attend a performance often want to chat with members of the cast, and they are compelled to stand in the lobby. There ought to be a place to bring artists and patrons of the arts together in an atmosphere of culture and conviviality.

The Players Club is an informal social organization that will encourage interaction among our subscribers, donors, performers, and technical artists in a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. Every Friday and Saturday evening of any Unity Theatre event, Club members will have access to the Atrium Lounge just off the lobby. The Lounge will be open before the performance, during intermission, and until midnight. A hostess will be on duty to welcome Players Club members, to offer free coffee, to provide glasses and a free corking service to those who have brought wine, and to attend to you during the intermission. If concession items are pre-purchased, our hostess will have them ready and waiting at intermission. Following the performance, our cast,

crew and their guests will be invited to join Club members in the Atrium.

It's just one more way for you to enjoy your theatre experience and to show your support for Unity Theatre and our efforts.

The Club is not for everyone. Club membership is available exclusively to subscribers who chose to purchase a membership. Membership is \$30 per person for one season. Circle members who have contributed \$1,000 or more in a given season will have their membership fee waived. For non-members, admission to the Atrium Lounge will be \$10 per person per event.

To join the Players Club, or for more information, visit or call the Unity Theatre box office at 979 830-8358 (Mon.-Fri., 10:00-2:00)

UNITY THEATRE REFLECTIONS

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Unity Theatre
300 Church Street
Brenham, Texas 77833
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