



## A SALUTE TO SIR ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER

Auditions were held; the cast of thirty aspiring singers was selected; and now rehearsals are in full swing for this year's summer musical revue, a tribute to the work of Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber. Some of Webber's shows featured in the music revue include *The Likes of Us*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *By Jeeves*, *Evita*, *Aspects of Love*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Starlight Express*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *Cats*, and *Phantom of the Opera*. Recognized around the world for his beautiful music, Webber has accumulated numerous awards including seven Tonys, three Grammys, a Golden Globe, an Oscar, and the Kennedy Center Honors.

Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber, one of the greatest modern day composers, is best known for *Phantom of the Opera*, a musical in which he wrote the lead female role for his wife Sarah Brightman, *Cats*, set to the poetry of T.S. Eliot, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and *Evita*, a musical about the life of Eva Peron, first lady of Argentina. He also produced the 2004 movie version of *Phantom*.

"This is the first time we've done music all by the same composer," said director Robert Randall. "Patty Leeper came up with the show's concept, researched the composer, and selected the shows and songs that would best fit our venue. She also designed the layout of a set with staircases and a variety of levels and placed the band on raised platforms."

Once the cast was set, next came the most difficult task, assigning the performers to the different songs. The production staff held "sing-offs" to determine who would work on which song. "There are so many amazing voices that picking one person to work on a song was almost impossible," said Robert. "In

some cases we divided up songs with multiple small solos, while we developed other songs into group numbers, offering more opportunities for the cast to sing."

Some wonderful support staff has joined the production. Phyllis Bonds is not only singing a number in the show, she also is assisting with group music rehearsals and those who need solo/duet coaching. "Kristen Vining-Stauffer has, much to my delight, returned to the piano, lending her talents with all the musical aspects of the show," Robert added. Dick Inglis will be back in the band once more, and Breann Eggers will take over the choreography. Corrie Stiefel, taking on the role of the stage manager, will have as her assistant Tricia Chow, a recent Whitman graduate. Brian Hatley, Dale Grogan, Curt Thompson, Bob Griswold, and Carol Anselmo lent their



Andrew Lloyd Webber, knighted for his marvelous music by Queen Elizabeth in 1992.

technical support too.

The production runs August 7, 8, 14 and 15 at 8:00 p.m. with doors opening at 7:15 for festival seating, and August 16 at 2:00 p.m. with doors opening at 1:15. Tickets are \$12 for fourteen and older and \$9 for thirteen and under. The box office will be open August 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, and 13 from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and August 7, 8, 14, and 15 from 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Hours on Sunday, August 16 will be from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. You may also visit our website at [ltww.org](http://ltww.org) for this information.

By Cheryl Sutlick

# A NON-TECHIE LOOK AT THEATER TECH

Director Jean Weber mulls over a scale model of the Little Theatre's stage built for her by husband Gerry. "I have toy furniture and cardboard cutouts. I move things around until I can 'see' the set, the exits and entrances, the furnishings, how my actors will move around each other." Like Jean, most directors start with a clear notion of the seemingly mundane: what kind of physical space their play will inhabit. They translate their vision into detailed drawings. Then on a Saturday morning, Bill Gilbert, Curt Thompson, Al Sutlick, and a dozen other volunteers come in to build and paint the set.

"I thought about *Noises Off* for two years," local contractor and theater volunteer George Smith said. *Noises Off* was a play about actors putting on a play. The audience had to see both the supposed play's formal stage and its backstage where the funniest action took place: Easy for theaters with revolving stages; nearly impossible for those like Little Theatre which lacked the turntables. George finally devised a set where everything was double-hinged so that, with a few twists, a fancy staircase turned into a backstage fire escape, a lovers' balcony into work scaffolding.

The late Jon Rubin, Walter Keyes, and Ron Fasstrup relished challenging sets. Once, Jehovah-like, they had to figure out how to make rain. Audiences gasped as they saw raindrops splash down a cabin window and bounce off the porch. The men did it with a garden hose, plastic pipe, a rubberized trough, and a kid's wading pool.

To blend with the various sets, crews repaint the stage floor for almost every production. Gloria Schille figures the floor currently has about 30 coats of paint. Scrape it down like an archeologist does a dig, and you'd uncover a decade of Little Theatre plays.

Every set must be dressed to evoke a particular world. Props volunteers filled the *Angel Street* set with long drapes, several chairs, an upholstered sofa, round tables covered with cloths and crockery, a mantelpiece littered with geegaws, and pictures leaning off papered walls—all to produce a claustrophobic sitting room where a cowed young wife might go mad.

Props are like brides' outfits: something old, something new, something borrowed--. For the *On*

*Golden Pond* set, Jan Torland brought in dozens of seashells, souvenirs her Seabee grandfather collected on South Pacific islands during World War II. Jan and Carol Anselmo carved 239 "rocks" out of Styrofoam to make a fireplace perfect for the rustic cabin in *Golden Pond*. *The Fantasticks* costumer Patricia Wilson got the 25 feathers she needed for "Indian" Mortimer's headdress from the state penitentiary's pheasant farm. The prisoners thought picking feathers out of the yard for a play was "a weird but welcome break in their routine."

Three fortyish guys, a 12-year-old, and a long-time Social Security recipient designed lights for *The Fantasticks* and many other shows. Lights and sound are apprenticeship skills. A novice combines a fascination with electricity and, now, computers, adds an artist's sense of color and tone, then learns by doing.

Veteran Bernie Frazier began by offering to light a USO stage while he was serving with the Corps of Engineers in Leghorn, Italy. "I used dimmers from three different countries with different voltages for each." He remembers when lighting changes had to be done by hand and extension cords snaked all over the stage. Robert Randall, who adds lighting to his cornucopia of theater talents, says, "Lighting is like painting. On *Quilters* we used lights to paint different colors on the back scrim to create specific moods." Brian Hatley calls lighting "another character in a play."

The number of cues and light changes depends on the play. The one-act *Graceland* had a low of six. Last summer's musical revue with 26 singers, a band, posters, videos, and a narrator, required almost 300. Computer technology has made lighting easier, but, says Brian, "At some point you just have to eyeball it." Gene Dahl groans, "You can spend hours getting rid of a shadow you weren't expecting,"

Robert voiced a sentiment about lighting problems that could apply to theater tech in general. "It's not a question of if something will go wrong. It's when something will go wrong." Hard work, dedication, skill, and endless practice, though, actually mean our audiences hardly ever see anything but joy and drama in the tech work at Little Theatre.

By Mary Hanna

# THE BIGGEST BARGAIN IN WALLA WALLA

Season tickets to the Little Theatre are still only \$40. Individual tickets are still \$12 for adults, \$9 for children. The 2009-2010 season will have a farce, a tender drama, a mystery, and a music-filled fairy tale.

Remember The Three Tenors—Luciano Pavarotti, Placido Domingo and the one Seinfeld called “the other guy”? Little Theatre’s **LEND ME A TENOR** has a flamboyant opera star, young lovers, laughs, and some grand singing. Comedy by Ken Ludwig. Carol Anselmo, director. Sonya Gurley and Greg Jones, producers.  
*Auditions on Aug. 11, 12. Performances: Sept. 25, 26 and Oct. 2, 3, 4, 9, 10.*

“I knew that ‘w-a-t-e-r’ meant the wonderful cool something flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul.” **THE MIRACLE WORKER** tells the true story of blind, deaf Helen Keller and the devoted teacher who awakened the little girl to words and the world.  
William Gibson, playwright. Terry and Sherry McConn, directors. Jan Torland, producer.  
*Audition dates: Sept. 29, 30. Performances: Nov. 20, 21, 27, 28, 29 and Dec. 4, 5.*

Forget DNA tests. For those, you first have to have a body! Agatha Christie and C.S.I. fans will chuckle over the disappearing-reappearing “bodies” in our mystery play: **EXIT THE BODY**. Fred Carmichael, playwright. Jean Weber, director. Barbara McKinney, producer.  
*Auditions: Dec. 1, 2. Performances: Feb. 12, 13, 19, 20, 21, 26, 27*

Back before woods were full of environmentalists, they were home to princesses, wandering orphans, witches, unicorns, and other magical beings. Journey with Little Theatre **INTO THE WOODS**. Music and lyrics, Stephen Sondheim. Book, James Lapine. Co-directors, Becky and Brian Hatley. Vocal director, Paul Dennis. Producer, Megan Smith.  
*Auditions: Feb. 23, 24. Performances: Apr. 30 and May 1, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22.*

## Theatre News

The 35 Little Theatre supporters at the May 4 potluck ate chicken salad and chocolate cake, elected Board members, applauded award winners, and enjoyed good jokes and conversation.

Angie Alden, Carol Anselmo, Dale Grogan, Brian Hatley, Jon Loney, and Cheryl Sutlick were all elected to new or second terms on the Theatre’s Board of Directors.

President Carol Anselmo presented awards for Dedicated Service to 17 men and women. The Laura Peterson Award for long, dedicated volunteer work at the Theatre was given to Barbara McKinney. Barbara has served in a variety of backstage roles, including producer for three plays this past year alone, and organizer of the opening night galas. The President’s Award is given at the President’s discretion to honor a major contributor to Little Theatre. Carol honored Patty Leeper. In last summer’s Musical Revue, Patty sang the Annie Oakley song, “Anything You Can Do, I Can Do Better.” She has proven that over and over, both backstage and onstage. Julie Swenson won the Newcomer Award. Since coming to Little Theatre just two years ago, Julie has worked on props, organized our email files, and served on the box office committee and on our Board of Directors.

House Manager Merle Sherman named Henry Pope as Usher of the Season. He also thanked all his ushers. “You are the ‘face’ of the Little Theatre to our theatre-goers, and you represent us superbly.” Connie Johnson, Box Office Director, called every one of her volunteers an “award winner.” Marie Allen was gifted with a flowering plant in thanks for years of “dressing” our theater with her beautiful clothes and cheerful, expectant attitude. Marie noted that she’s been coming to LT productions since 1973. “I look forward to each season.” **INFORMER READERS ARE INVITED TO LITTLE THEATRE’S SPRING AND FALL POTLUCKS FOR FOOD AND SOCIALIZING.** (Nobody has better stories to tell than theater-folk.)

Mary Hanna is now editor of the *Informer*. She urges readers to sign up for the online edition of the newsletter by emailing their requests to: [littletheatreofwallawalla@live.com](mailto:littletheatreofwallawalla@live.com). Readers may also email comments, criticisms and suggestions regarding the *Informer* to Mary’s attention at the same email address.

At the June 29, 2009 meeting, the Board of Directors demonstrated its respect for Carol Anselmo’s and Brian Hatley’s leadership by electing them to second terms as President and Vice President of the Little Theatre.

A fight poster advertising the play *Heaven Can Wait* hangs backstage at Little Theatre. It commemorates Sean McKinzie, who directed that play, acted in *Something’s Afoot*, participated in several Kaleidoscope (statewide competition) plays, and served on our Board of Directors. Sean was a vibrant man who loved tuxedos, dressing up, and acting as master of ceremonies at charity events. He died, too young, on April 28, 2009.



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## PRE-AUDITION WORKSHOP

Have you ever sat in a Little Theatre audience and thought, “I played a darned good pumpkin in my third grade pageant. I’d love to go on stage here”? But you weren’t sure how to proceed, or the idea of auditioning for a play made you break into a sweat. Go to Little Theatre’s Pre-Audition Workshop, 2 p.m. Saturday, September 26, 1130 E. Sumach.

Rich Hinz, workshop organizer, and several of the Theatre’s directors will explain how auditions work and what directors look for, describe the season’s plays, give you a tour of the theatre, and answer your questions. Then you will get a chance to practice auditioning. Scenes from upcoming plays, including some one-acts, will be available and you can go on stage and read lines. “It’ll be just like a real audition,” Rich says, “except there’s no stress, because you are not up for a part. It’s low key, with no pressure.”

Rich has performed for years, playing everyone from Hamlet to a backwoods postman. He has directed a comedy, a mystery, and a classic drama. He understands what directors need from an audition and the stress potential actors experience. He began the workshops four years ago to help prospective actors learn to audition well and feel comfortable doing it. “Anybody,” Rich promises, “can give it a try.”

## AUDITIONS!

### LEND ME A TENOR AUDITIONS

Regular auditions will be held at the Little Theatre on August 11 and 12 at 7 p.m. for *Lend Me A Tenor*. Director Carol Anselmo will cast four men and four women, ranging in age from the early twenties to the late forties and above. For two of the men, singing experience is desirable but not required. Carol describes the play as “a madcap comedy with sparkling dialogue and lots of action.”

### *The Little Theatre of Walla Walla Informer*

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