

Acton-Boxborough Regional High School's Proscenium Circus
Announces Auditions for the Fall Play 2009

OUR TOWN

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS BY THORNTON WILDER

"No American play describes more powerfully how we imagine ourselves."

– *New York Daily News*

"Wherever you come near the human race there's layers and layers of nonsense."

– Thornton Wilder, *Our Town*

Directed by Dr. Maureen Shea

Producer & Dramaturge – James Sheehan

PC Advisor & Executive Producer – Linda Potter

Scenic Design – Mirta Tocci

Projection Design – Bill Moore

Costume Design – Sandra Bourdeau

Technical Direction – Brendan Hearn

Stage Manager – Jesse Freitas

Assistant Stage Managers – Cullan Bendig, Caroline Klinkmueller

Assistant to the Producer – Olivia Lunardo

Assistants to the Dramaturge – Caitlin Barrette, Elspeth Vandegrift

THE DIRECTOR'S VISION

Our Town is the American classic by Thornton Wilder. The play tells the story of average citizens living their "ordinary," "extraordinary" lives in an imaginary, small New England town, Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, in the first decades of the twentieth century.

I have often thought of this play driving through small towns in Massachusetts, going past houses that look like the Gibbs' and Webbs' houses that appear in Wilder's first act and then the inevitable church and cemetery in the town center that are the settings and locale of his second and third acts.

Our production will focus on the similarities between this mythical town to our north and what it was (and is!) like to live in our town, Acton, MA. We will play at least one performance in a "site specific" setting, with the audience actually attending young Emily Webb's wedding in the Woodlawn Chapel in Acton Center and then her funeral in Woodlawn Cemetery. As we move from "Daily Life" through "Love and Marriage" to "Death and Eternity" we will hopefully learn to appreciate more deeply and fully the meaning of life – the richness of family, the power of community and the reaffirming rituals of our everyday lives. Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* is, for me, a meditation on gratitude and wonder.

– Maureen Shea, Director

BRIEF SHOW SYNOPSIS

In Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, the Stage Manager introduces the town of Grover's Corners to the audience and sets the scenes while serving as narrator. From his words emerge the Webb Family and the Gibbs Family, along with many other citizens of Grover's Corners. Act I, which is titled "The Daily Life," is about the simple life of the people in Grover's Corners. The wedding of Emily Webb and George Gibbs takes place in Act II, which is titled "Love and Marriage," though Emily and George are unsure if they are really ready for marriage, as they are both young. Act III, "Death and Eternity," is several years later, after Emily has died in childbirth. We meet Emily, Mrs. Gibbs, and other people who have died throughout the course of the play and they share their thoughts. When the Stage Manager gives Emily the option of re-living one day back on earth, she chooses her twelfth birthday. Finding it very plain and uninteresting, she realizes that we do not appreciate life as we should when we are alive, and she returns to the land of the dead with the Stage Manager, who gives his final remarks before the curtain falls. *It is crucial that everybody reads the play prior to auditions for more insight on the story, plot, and characters.*

SHOW HISTORY

Our Town is set in a theatre where the stage manager transports the audience back in time to 1901. *Our Town* was first presented at the McCarter Theater in Princeton, New Jersey on January 22, 1938. The second stop on the pre-Broadway tour was in Boston at the Wilbur Theatre, opening on January 25, 1938. Its New York City debut was on February 4, 1938 at Henry Miller's Theatre, and later moved to the Morosco Theatre. The play was produced and directed by Jed Harris and starred Frank Craven as the Stage Manager. Wilder and Harris received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1938 for the work. Four Broadway revivals of the play have been seen through time at New York's City Center in 1944, the ANTA Playhouse in 1969 (starring Henry Fonda), and the Lyceum Theatre in 1988 (winning the Tony Award for Best Revival). It was most recently revived on Broadway in 2002 at the Booth Theatre, earning Paul Newman a Tony Award nomination for his performance as the Stage Manager. A scaled-down Off-Broadway revival directed by and starring David Cromer is current playing an open-ended run at the Barrow Street Theatre in New York.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

24 characters PLUS stagehands. Please note that some roles may be cast against the gender indicated in the play.

- **The Stage Manager** tells the story and is our guide for the performance, telling us what we need to know about the town and its inhabitants and orchestrating the action on stage.

The Webb Family:

- **Mr. Charles Webb** is the Editor of the town's newspaper, *The Sentinel*.
- **Mrs. Myrtle Webb** is the devoted wife of Charles and the mother of their two children, Emily and Wally.
- **Emily Webb** is the intelligent, pretty, engaging daughter of Charles and Myrtle Webb. We meet her in high school, and then see her marry the boy next door, George Gibbs. She dies nine years after their marriage, in 1913, while giving birth to their second child.
- **Wally Webb** is Emily's little brother. He dies after his appendix ruptures.

The Gibbs Family:

- **Dr. Frank Gibbs** is the town's physician.
- **Mrs. Julia Gibbs** is Frank's devoted wife and the mother of George and Rebecca. She dreams of visiting Paris.
- **George Gibbs**, whom we see first at age 15, is the star of the high school baseball team. He is in love with and marries Emily Webb.
- **Rebecca Gibbs** is George's little sister.

Townspeople:

- **Howie Newsome** is the milkman who makes deliveries from a cart drawn by his old horse, Bessie.
- **Joe Crowell** is the newspaper boy who later excels in school and later at MIT in Boston, but who is later killed in action in WWI.
- **Si Crowell** is Joe's younger brother. He takes over his paper route.
- **Sam Craig** is Emily Webb's cousin. He moves out West but he returns for Emily's funeral.
- **Joe Stoddard** is the undertaker in charge of Emily's funeral.
- **Bill Warren** is the town constable. There's not much crime to solve, so we see him mostly helping people.
- **Professor Willard** is an expert on geology and anthropology. He delivers a very boring speech on the town's history.
- **Simon Stimson** is the choirmaster and organist at the Congregational Church and an alcoholic. He commits suicide.
- **Mrs. Louella Soames** is a choir member and a friend of Myrtle Webb and Julia Gibbs. She criticizes Simon Stimson for his drinking.
- **Woman in the Balcony**
- **Man in the Auditorium**
- **Lady in the Box**
- **Three Baseball Players** - George's friends

SHOW DATES

Friday, October 30 - 7:30pm

Saturday, October 31 - 2:00pm

Sunday, November 1 - *Matinee (special site-specific performance)*

Friday, November 6 - 7:30pm

Saturday, November 7 - 2:00pm & 7:30pm

NOVEMBER 1 - SPECIAL PERFORMANCE

The matinee of *Our Town* on Sunday, November 1 is sure to be one of the most talked about events of the fall season in Acton and Boxborough. 120 VIP audience-members will start out in the ABRHS Auditorium for Act I and the first part of Act II, as though it were a normal performance.

They will then leave the theatre, having an hour to get lunch and get to the chapel adjacent to the Woodlawn Cemetery in Acton Center for the wedding of George and Emily. A live organist (Bill Klauer) will accompany the wedding service in the chapel, led by the Stage Manager as the church Pastor.

After the wedding, the Stage Manager and Emily will lead the audience on an eight-minute walk to an older section of the cemetery where Emily's funeral takes place.

When Emily decides that she would like to return to earth for one day, the audience moves ahead to either the Acton Woman's Club, the Hosmer House, or back to ABRHS, where the scene in the Webb house takes place and the play ends. A reception and talk-back with the actors and production team will occur afterwards. The VIP audience will consist of AB Friends of Drama season subscribers, colleagues of Dr. Shea, historical commissioners, and other supporters and members of the community. *Please note that due to space restraints minimal crew members will be taken on this special performance.*

AUDITION DATES

Auditions: September 1 (2:30-6:30); September 2 (2:30-6:30); September 3 (2:30-6:30)

Callbacks: September 4 (*Times TBD – please note there is no school this day; if you want to be considered for anything but the ensemble, please make yourself available all day*)

Youth Auditions: Dr. Shea is considering casting a few local youths in *Our Town* in cameo roles on the show (ie, a paper boy or flower girl). If needed, these auditions will be on Tuesday, September 8. *Auditions and callbacks will be held in the ABRHS Auditorium, 36 Charter Road, Acton, MA 01720. Please note that if you get called back it does not necessarily mean that you are cast in the show; the directors just need to see more. If you are not called back, you may still be cast in the show.*

AUDITION PROCEDURE

- Prepare a one to two-minute monologue in any style, preferably contemporary. This should show a range of emotions and can be from any play or movie; it should be written by someone else, not a self-composed monologue.
- **Read the script in advance** and familiarize yourself with the characters'.
- Be prepared to interact with and talk to the panel. (IE, Maureen may ask you to "re-sell" her shoes as a way for her to see your emotion).

WAYS TO PREPARE

- **Read the script!** Copies of the script are available in the PC Office, ABRHS Library, Acton Memorial Library, and Sergeant Library.
- **Watch the DVD!** A professionally-filmed version of the 2002 Broadway revival directed by James Naughton (*City of Angels, Chicago*) and starring Paul Newman is available on DVD. You can buy it on Amazon or watch it for free on YouTube.
- **See the play professionally!** If you're in the New York City area any time soon, see the David Cromer revival currently playing an open-ended run Off-Broadway at the Barrow Street Theatre.
- **See the play locally!** If you're staying local, the Sudbury Savoyards will be presenting *Our Town* July 24-August 1, 2009, directed by Ed Knights.

Remember, if you choose to see another director or actor's interpretation of the piece, make sure to keep your interpretation as genuine and unique as possible

AUDITION SIGN-UP

Please contact the producer, James Sheehan (JFSheehan51@yahoo.com, 508-517-1223) beginning **August 3**, for a five-minute audition slot. Only one person per slot. Please arrive fifteen minutes before your scheduled audition time to fill out an audition form. Headshots will be taken at auditions to assist the casting team.

REHEARSALS

Our Town rehearsals will take place after school Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday afternoons. Sunday afternoons will be primarily for large-group scenes, run-thru's, and crew integration. Not every actor will be called at every rehearsal. *There will be crew involvement with the show; set run and props crew should plan to attend the most crew rehearsals because they will be interacting onstage with actors at points in the play.*

Please prepare a list of known conflicts (SAT prep, driver's ed, Madrigals, a cappella group, etc.) between September 1 and November 8. Other shows, dance/voice lessons, parties, and student-run a cappella groups are not legitimate excuses. We will attempt to work around the Madrigals and other school-sponsored events. Please **DO NOT** audition for or participate in *Our Town* if you cannot make a full commitment, both in rehearsals and at home memorizing lines and material. Every actor is expected and required to attend every scheduled rehearsal, tech, preview, and performance.

"Crunch time" (tech) begins Sunday, October 18 and will run until Thursday, October 29. Rehearsals and runs may not be scheduled every day but please make yourself available after school from 2:30-9:30pm on week days, and 9:00am-9:30pm on the weekends. *(Please note that these times are just estimates and possible times of rehearsals and tech work days!)*

OTHER WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH OUR TOWN & PC

We are seeking responsible student and adult volunteers to work on the show in various ways. We have very qualified adults, both professionals and volunteers, who will be working on the show to mentor students and parents. Any adult working on the show will need a CORI check prior to beginning work. Some student crew work includes 990 credit. The following are examples of open crews:

- Set Construction
- Set Painting
- Set Run
- Audio-visual (*Lighting and Sound – students should be registered in either Intro to Technical Theatre or Audio/Visual Media for the 2009-'10 school year, taught by Mr. Brendan Hearn*)
- Properties and Set Dressing
- Costume Execution and Backstage Assistance
- Make-up and Hair Execution and Assistance
- Publicity, Marketing, Public Relations
- Ushers, House Management, Concessions

Please contact James Sheehan (JFSheehan51@yahoo.com, 508-517-1223) if you are interested in working on the show. Sign-up's will also be available after auditions.

MEET THE PRODUCTION TEAM...

MAUREEN SHEA (Director) Dr. Shea is currently a Professor in the Department of Performing Arts at Emerson College. Professional directing credits include Music Theatre Group and Circle Repertory Company in New York, NY; the Los Angeles Women's Shakespeare Company; the Philadelphia Drama Guild; the Empire State Institute for Performing Arts in Albany, NY; Theatre Three in Dallas, TX; the Porthouse Theatre Company in Kent, OH; the Shreveport Little Theatre; EcoTheater in Hinton, WV; and the Huntington Theatre, Coyote Theatre Company, the Nora Theatre Company, The Theatre Offensive, Next Stage, Inc., New Voices and Word of Mouth in the Boston area. Her production of *How I Got That Story* was presented at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts as a national finalist in the American College Theatre Festival. She has been an artist-in-residence at the Iowa Playwrights Lab, the Toneelacademie in Maastricht, The Netherlands and an Associate Director of the Company of Women, an all female Shakespeare Company led by Carol Gilligan and Kristin Linklater. Dr. Shea is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers.

MIRTA TOCCI (Scenic Design & Artwork) Ms. Tocci is a visual artist, born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, living and working in Boston and Barcelona, Spain. Her work has been shown in individual and collective exhibitions in galleries and museums in Buenos Aires, Paris, Berlin, Köln, Brussels, London, Chicago, New Jersey, Santa Barbara, Hasselt (Belgium), Ferrara (Italy), Humlebaak (Denmark), Girona and Barcelona. In Boston she has created many scenic designs and multimedia works for the theatre: *Tongues of Fire*, *Bel Canto* and *Last Rites* for The Theater Offensive, *Last Train to Nibroc* for Coyote Theatre Company, *Malcolm X*, *The Seduction Project*, *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* and *Anne & Emmett* for Emerson Stage, *Body and Sold* for Tempest Productions, *Queer Theory: A Musical Travesty* for Slippage Productions and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Crucible*, *Brecht Unplugged*, *The Miracle Worker* and *Train Wrecked: A Memoir* for Roxbury Repertory Theater at Roxbury Community College. She also created *In the Garden*, a three-month project based on the life and work of Emily Dickinson with 13 collaborators (artists, scholars, critics, designers, gardeners and chefs) and 150 inmates at the Women's Prison, Wadras, in Barcelona. She is the recipient of numerous prizes and grants. She is currently Artist-in-Residence at the Institute for Liberal Arts & Interdisciplinary Studies at Emerson College.

BILL MOORE (Projection Design & Photography) Bill Moore has taught French theatre, world drama and Shakespeare during a teaching career of over 30 years in French and English at Phillips Exeter and then Milton Academy. He has mounted several pocket theater productions in French of Molière and Ionesco, and more recently, Sartre's *Huis clos*, and an English translation of Yukio Mishima's play, *The Decline and Fall of the Suzaku*. Bill studied 'Shakespeare in Production' with Miriam Gilmore at Stratford-upon-Avon on an NEH grant in 1996, and developed a similar Shakespeare course at Milton using the Boston area theater's Shakespeare productions as a resource. For the last two seasons, he has worked as an assistant director with Maureen Shea, this spring on the sell-out Emerson Stage production of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, and in the fall of 2007, on Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*. He is a photographer when he isn't teaching, with a show of Cambodian images at The Laconia Gallery in Boston in the summer of 2006.

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS? CONCERNS?

Contact James Sheehan (JFSheehan51@yahoo.com, 508-517-1223) with questions regarding auditions, to sign up for a crew, or to make an audition appointment.

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