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“Notes from the Director's Chair” is a monthly newsletter for members and friends of Grinder Productions

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Grinder 2
Grumblings

Picasso 2

Girl Power/ Hot Flashes 2

Dirty Work 2

Member Spotlight 2

Technical Help 3

Tales from the Stage 4

Spring Has Sprung

The grass has ris', I wonder where the director is?

Well, it seems that the last reaches of winter are finally leaving us and spring has finally arrived. And with the return of spring has come robins, red-wing blackbirds, mud, more mud and of course, some light hearted theatre. Spring fever has struck the stage!

In this issue, lots of information on our upcoming shows, but first, lets take a moment to bask in our recent success:

Black Coffee



First of all, we'd like to extend some enormous Thank You's to everyone involved in making our Second Annual Agatha Christie Revival Showcase such a

great success.

Thank you to Fred Morris and Vision Financial and our other partners for sponsoring the event. Thank you to the cast and crew and numerous people who contributed props, costumes and help.

This was an incredibly fun production



to be involved with and we are thrilled to have been able to perform for more than 500 people over the three nights.

We even received some coverage of the event on Cogeco the Monday before the show.



Bert Chamberlain charmed us as Hercule Poirot, and spent weeks growing the appropriate moustache for the occasion.

Not only was Black Coffee the first play written as a play by Agatha Christie, it was also the first time that Hercule Poirot appeared on the stage.



Grinder's Grumblings

It's been a busy year so far at Grinder Productions, and I see no reason for that to change down the road. If nothing else, we'll get even busier as we add more projects.

This upturn in activity has had many positive spin-offs, including the formation of the Grinder Productions Executive Committee. This is a group of people who have volunteered to assist me in carrying out the day-to-day operations of the company. At this point the committee consists of Brad Rooke, Julie Kennedy, Lisa Branton, Andy Johnston and Jennifer Gordon, and down the road we may be looking to add more committee members from our general membership, depending on how the role of this committee evolves.

I'd like to extend a huge thank-you to these people for all they have contributed already (including this newsletter - thanks Jen!).

Picasso at the Lapine Agile

If you've just recently joined Grinder Productions or even if you've been a longtime member but just haven't had the chance to get out and enjoy one of our shows, this one is a perfect example of what we're all about. It's fun, funny, quirky and slightly off the wall, just like us. From the mind of comedian Steve Martin comes this comedy set in Paris in 1904. What happens when Picasso and Einstein meet at a bar... and then, Elvis shows up! Come on out May 17, 18 & 18th to find out.

Hot Flashes - for a Cure!

Later this spring, we have a jovial look at women going through mid life crisis—the lighter side of menopause. Hot Flashes is a series of vignettes and will provide tons of opportunity for our female talent to get involved. Plus, its for a great cause. This one is going to be a fundraiser for the Canadian Cancer Society.

Hot Flashes will run May 24th & 25th at the Fergus Grand Theatre.

Stay tuned for more details on this all female production!

Dirty Work at the Crossroads

June 28, 29 & 30th, bring the whole family to celebrate the end of school with this hilarious melodrama. Ripen up those rotten tomatoes; actually, the throwing of actual fruit is not allowed in the theatre, but the hurling of insults and lobbing of cheers is fully encouraged in this audience participation play. Get ready to boo the villain, cheer the hero and have some fun.

Member Spotlight

Grinder's Becky Branton brought home a Gold Medal in Ringette from the Canada Winter Games held last month in the Yukon. Not only did her team slaughter every other team they played, including the big bad Alberta squad, but Becky scored the first goal in the gold medal game!

Way to go Becky!



Becky Branton brings home GOLD!

Technical Help

So, just what do we mean when we say we need technical help for our shows?

We're not looking for any particularly unique or hard to come by talents that could only be acquired through years in the 'biz'. What we're really looking for is a little bit of time and a lot of enthusiasm.

Technical help refers to the numerous bits and pieces involved in putting a show together that don't actually involve getting on the stage.

If you've just recently joined us or you're new to the whole theatre experience, this can be a fantastic way to get your feet wet, find out what it's all about, without having to memorize any lines!

What kind of things are we looking for? Well, the list is pretty long and no experience is necessary, so there's definitely a job for you.

Set Construction and Set Painting



Ever wondered how a set actually gets built? For each Grinder production, there is usually one or two Saturday's

set aside for set construction and another day or two set aside for set painting. An extra set of hands is always welcome on these days to help build the set, and if you have your own tools, they are welcome to follow you along too. When it comes to set painting, no experience is necessary, just some old clothes that you don't mind getting a little paint splattered. You will learn some of the tricks and techniques of the trade used to give a set depth and character.

Props

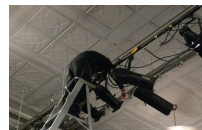
Help us find all the bits and pieces that go on a set from furniture to picture frames, to finding the perfect flower pot if the play calls for one.

Costumes

Don't worry, no sewing necessarily required! Simply help us find the right pieces for each actor, and hopefully they fit!

Lighting

This is one of the few truly technical jobs in the theatre, but if you have an interest, we're always happy to train new people to help out.



Sound Design

If you want to learn how to operate a sound board, we're happy to train, but even if you don't want to actually be hands on with the sound during the show, there's lots of other work to do in helping us find the right sound effects or music for the show.

Assistant Stage Manager

Help out back stage during a show—making sure all the props and actors get to the right place at the right time and helping out the stage manager as required.

Stage Manager

The director's right hand, and the person who runs the show from opening night on. If you are organized and can stay calm in crazy conditions, we're always looking for new stage managers.

Director

Yes, even you could sit in the big chair if you've got the time to commit to creating a show.

Spreading the Word

This is where we need the most help. We need people to help to make sure every avenue is explored to get the word out about our upcoming shows and help us sell as many tickets as possible.

We need lots of help putting up posters, designing the sandwich board or theatre window display, securing advertising spots for the programs or telling absolutely everyone you know why they have to come out and see our play. See the back page for more information on selling tickets.

Want to Learn More?

We offer several workshops throughout the year. See the sidebar at right for information on the Production Management Workshop on April 23rd.

In other news...

Watch for our booth at the Fergus Home Show this May 9th—11th. If you would like to help out at the booth for one of the nights, give us a call, we're looking for volunteers!

If you want to learn even more about the technical aspects of putting on a show, sign up for the Production Management Workshop on April 23rd from 7pm to 9pm. This workshop will provide an overview of the technical organization involved in putting on a show. Useful for directors, stage managers or anyone else interested in learning more about this side of the production. The registration is \$20 and includes a Production Management manual.

Until next time, Take care!

Eric



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Tickets Tickets Tickets

Tickets for all Grinder shows are currently \$12.00 each.

Groups of 10 or more get \$1.00 off the ticket price. And a special offer only available to members of Grinder Productions: Any member who sells 10 tickets to any Grinder Production event (that they aren't appearing in) receives their own ticket for FREE!

Call 519-787-1981 to order.

Theatre that Dares to be Different

Tales from the Stage

The Wardrobe Malfunction.

So, its opening night for Wuthering Heights, we're partway through the first act... I'm Stage Manager for the show, so I'm sitting in the booth at the back of the theatre relying on my Assistant Stage Managers (ASMs) to make sure that everything goes smoothly back stage...The lights have faded at the end of a scene...I bring them up again expecting to see "Catherine" sitting by the fire but instead, I'm staring at an empty stage.

Where's the actor? A couple of seconds that feel like hours pass, and still no actor...So, I'm on the headset to the ASM's trying to find out what's going on and the only response they will give me is "Um...we're having a little problem" Oh great! What kind of problem? As the seconds creep by, I learn that Julie can't get her dress off.

Somehow, her dress has become stuck and won't come off despite 5 people tugging at it in different directions.

Finally, when I've just about given up, out walks a slightly disheveled "Catherine" in the correct costume...right over top of the one that wouldn't come off!

Jennifer Gordon