

# The Grinder Standard

*The monthly newsletter for the Members, Sponsors, Media Partners, Cultural Allies, Patrons and Friends of Grinder Productions and its affiliated companies*

**July 2009**



*Grinder's Angels?*

*Kelly Taylor, Alexena Whiting and Hollie Douglas as the Christian martyrs Choinia, Agape and Irena in Hroswitha of Gandersheim's **Dulcitus** this past June at the Ennotville Library. Along with fellow cast members Sherri Lamothe, Millie Tennant, Daniella Almanza and my co-director Becky Branton, these girls overcame the many obstacles in the way of this production and stepped up to deliver some inspired performances.*

*Thank-you ladies!*

*Catch Kelly and Alexena in our first production at the Belwood Hall, the hilarious comedy **5 Women Wearing the Same Dress.***

## **Playing this month at Grinder**

*At the Ennotville Summer Theatre:*

### **The Birth of Merlin**

*A unique presentation*

By William Rowley

Directed by Eric Goudie

**July 2<sup>nd</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>**

### **Commedia!**

*A Commedia Dell'Arte*

By John Brandt and

The Penny Playhouse

Directed by Eric Goudie

**July 23<sup>rd</sup> – August 8<sup>th</sup>**

*At the Belwood Summer Theatre:*

### **5 Women Wearing the Same Dress**

*A Comedy*

By Alan Ball

Directed by Stacey

Ingham

**July 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>**

### **Our Girls**

*A Farce*

By Conrad Seiler

Directed by Eric Goudie

**July 30<sup>th</sup> – August 1<sup>st</sup>**

**Call 519-780-7593  
for tickets, or visit  
our online box office  
– [click here!](#)**

## **The Birth of Merlin**

I'm pleased to report that after much soul-searching, hand-wringing and other consternations I have finally found a workable formula for our second show of the Ennotville summer season, William Rowley's the Birth of Merlin.

The Birth of Merlin is a Jacobean play, erroneously (or purposefully) attributed to William Shakespeare, though even a cursory examination of the text is enough to dispel his hand in the authorship. It concerns several facets of the Arthurian legend – the battles between the English and the Welsh, the trials of Uter Pendragon, and of course Merlin. It takes a fanciful turn in imagining Merlin's birth as a fully-grown man, fathered by the devil himself and brought in the world by one "Joan Go'toot" a lovely if not somewhat gullible lass, with a Clown for a brother who is at times angry with her predicament and eager to take advantage of the opportunities it provides.

So the challenge with a play such as this (and with an audience used to a steady diet of Shakespeare, the porterhouse steak of Renaissance drama) lies in its presentation. Rather than committing five acts of cumbersome verse to memory we have chosen to present the text of this play as a dramatic reading, with a number of actors each covering the various roles. To illustrate the action of the play we have other actors, using simple costumes and props, playing the action in dumb show as it is being read aloud.

The Birth of Merlin opens on Thursday, July 2<sup>nd</sup> at 8pm at the Ennotville Library. Visit [www.grinderproductions.org](http://www.grinderproductions.org) or call 519-780-7593 to get your tickets now.

## **5 Women Wearing the Same Dress**

One of the most talked about shows this season has been our first Belwood show, 5 Women Wearing the Same Dress. The title alone has sparked a lot of conversation in theatre lobbies, over dinner tables and in casual conversations over the winter and spring. But the play is more than just a quirky one-line gag – it's something much more.

I don't want to give too much away about this play – keeping people guessing about the times and places when five women would be caught dead wearing the exact same dress is half the fun. But the other half is what's taking shape in rehearsals, and on that front I can let you in on just a few of this show's secrets.

The show is being directed by Stacey Ingham, whom some of you may remember from last year's sleeper hit at the Ennotville Library, First Kisses.

Working on a larger stage and with a bigger cast aren't the only challenges she faces in Belwood this year. While 5 Women is a very, very funny play, it doesn't pull any punches when it comes to the humour, so there's a bit of coarse language and mature content that must be handled very carefully in order to remain both tasteful and true to the intentions of the playwright.

5 Women Wearing the Same Dress opens on Thursday, July 16<sup>th</sup> and runs for just four performances – Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 8pm, and a 2pm Saturday matinee. Call 519-780-7593 for tickets, or visit [www.grinderproductions.org](http://www.grinderproductions.org).

## Vaudeville

The final show in our Ennotville Season, Vaudeville isn't an original show but rather an anthology of all the best and brightest from the Golden Age of popular entertainment in North America.

Before Television, before radio, but after the whole continent was made easily accessible by railway, there was Vaudeville. It was popular entertainment, of course, and no attempt was ever made to pass it off as high art (though the touring "star system" that formed the high art of the day was itself of highly questionable esthetic value). Shows were a medley of singing, dancing, stand-up, sketches and novelty acts, all intended to make the audience laugh. There was plenty of room for individual talents to shine, and since the focus was purely on making a profit shows were thrust onto the stage with little or no rehearsal time, and the performers had to generate a fair amount of their performance on the spur of the moment.

Despite the challenges, Vaudeville thrived until it was driven out of the theatres by cinema, though for a time both genres could be found in a single evening's entertainments, a marrying of film and live action that has only tentatively been explored by contemporary producers.

Our show will attempt to recapture some of the magic of the Vaudeville era. We'll have some old-fashioned songs and dances, as well as a generous dose of the comedy that formed the backbone of this art form. If we can we'll even through in a magic trick or two, or some other "one-trick pony" from the era.

Tickets? You know what do to.

## Commedia

The cavalcade of show announcements continues with news about the 3<sup>rd</sup> show in our Ennotville Season, Commedia!

This play is a free re-telling of a classic scenario of the Commedia D'ell Arte, an Italian form of Improv-based entertainment that was popular in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and is still performed today by various companies around the world.

All Commedia D'ell Arte scenes are built around stock characters – usually heroic-but-foolish heroes, innocent virgins, dirty old men, bumbling fathers, etc. Many of the comedic "tropes" that form the basis for today's TV sitcoms were first codified in the Commedia, from the "life lessons" of The Cosby Show to the buffoonery of Homer Simpson and the "show about nothing" devices of Seinfeld.

So you might think that this play will be about strange places and far-out people, but it will actually have a lot in common with today. If you like comedy this is definitely the show for you.

Commedia opens July 23<sup>rd</sup> and runs to August 8<sup>th</sup>. Call 519-780-7593 for tickets, or visit [www.grinderproductions.org](http://www.grinderproductions.org).