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 This announcement sponsored by Steve's Wonderful World of Pets in Williamsville



> BY ANTHONY CHASE

CURTAIN UP! 2006

25 Years of a Good Thing



It was a newcomer to Buffalo, 25 years ago, when the first Curtain Up! Celebration was held on a torn-up Main Street with plywood bridges and plastic snow fences steering revelers clear of the most dangerous parts of the rapid transit construction. Who could have imagined, that night, that the event, designed to bring some life to downtown, would become a long-standing tradition and veritable institution in our city, and that the theaters themselves would prove to be the undeniable economic success of the district?

Here we are, 25 years later, once again celebrating the opening of the theater season. The lavish Curtain Up! party is produced on a budget of \$50,000 for catering, entertainment, marketing, cleanup, printing, and that doesn't even begin to account for the labor of a bevy of dedicated theater district volunteers. Any profit from the event will go to the Theater District Association to cover the costs of holiday decorations in Theater District, new signage planned for the district and other projects designed to enhance the public enjoyment of the area. The dinner will be attended by 500 people (and at press time there were still a few seats available), but Curtain Up! will be attended by thousands.

As is almost always the case, the actual opening of the season will have occurred weeks before the "official" celebration on Friday, September 29, 2006, but the ceremonial importance of this annual ritual is missed by no one. Buffalo enjoys a remarkable abundance of rich and diverse theater offerings for a city of its size, and for once, the City of No Illusions does not hesitate to celebrate the fact that we've got a good thing going.

The evening will follow the tradition three-part format:

ACT ONE:

COCKTAILS AND DINNER IN THE THEATER DISTRICT

5pm-8:10pm

There will be a cocktail reception with a cash bar in the Grand Lobby of Shea's Performing Arts Center, open to everyone, starting at 5pm.

At 6:15pm., the Gala Dinner will be served on stage at Shea's, catered by So's Integrity Catering & Event Planning. The announcement indicates that the dress code is "creative black tie," a quaint phrase meaning it is impossible to force men to wear traditional tuxedos if they don't want to, and that you can, in essence, dress any way you want. The tables seat 10, and dinner tickets are \$80 per person. Theaters typically hold the curtain until 8:30pm. on Curtain Up! night to allow time to travel from the Gala Dinner to your show. For tickets and information call 716-852-5000.

ACT TWO:

SHOWTIME!

There are 14 official Curtain Up! shows. See the On the Boards section (page 30) and contact individual theaters to purchase tickets.

ACT THREE:

PARTY!

10:15pm

The Theater District Association invites you to join the party and enjoy the live entertainment, dancing and, for the first time ever, fireworks on Main Street in the heart of the Theater District.

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THE SHOWS

Not every theater in Buffalo produces a show at Curtain Up! and announced seasons inevitably change. On Curtain Up! night, however, there will be 14 shows to choose from:

- Alleyway Theatre has **UNHOLY TRINITY**, scenes and songs by Eric Bentley.
- Buffalo Ensemble Theatre presents **MAMA SONGS** by Annette Daniels-Taylor, the story of four generations of women.
- Gerald Fried Theatre Company presents **MEMORY GARDEN**, a play by Buffalo's Rebecca Ritchie featuring Rosalind Cramer and nonagenarian Manny Fried.
- The Irish Classical Theatre Company presents the musical, **A MAN OF NO IMPORTANCE** (reviewed in this issue of *Artvoice*).
- Kaleidoscope Theatre Productions presents **THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF AMERICA (ADBRIDGED)**.
- The Kavinoky Theatre presents Stephen Sondheim's musical comedy, **A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM**.
- At Lancaster Opera House you can see the Rodgers and Hammerstein classic,

SOUTH PACIFIC.

- MusicalFare Theatre offers **SISTERS OF SWING: THE ANDREWS SISTERS MUSICAL**, a biographical tour through the music of the famed sister group.
- New Phoenix Theatre on the Park presents Steven Berkoff's **THE METAMORPHOSIS**, based on the story by Franz Kafka.
- O'Connell & Company offers **BACK TO BACHARACH AND DAVID**, a revue of the music of Hal David and Burt Bacharach.
- The Paul Robeson Theatre presents **SOUL SOUNDS**, a whirlwind history of black music.
- Road Less Traveled Productions presents Emanuel Fried's **THE DODO BIRD** in their new theater at the Market Arcade cinemas.
- Shea's Smith Theatre is hosting a special presentation of O'Connell & Company's long-running **DIVA BY DIVA**, a cabaret performance of songs, reading, poetry, and jokes about women.
- And Studio Arena Theatre presents **3 MO' DIVAS**, a concert of eclectic music performed by three African American women with big voices.

In addition, there will be associated events that night:

THE METAMORPHOSIS



CEPA GALLERY, 617 Main Street, Market Arcade Building, is hosting *Deviant Bodies*, a free photo-based exhibition investigating complex issues and ideas through multiple lenses of transgender and gender variant perspectives. (www.cepagallery.com)

MARCELLA SHOW CLUB AND LOUNGE, Theatre Place, 622 Main Street, is hosting its *Life's a Drag* female impersonation show with performances at 10:15pm, 12:30am. (www.clubmarcella.com)

For further details about these shows, see the On the Boards section of *Artvoice* (page 30) or visit www.curtainupbuffalo.com.

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- 5 It's an opportunity to make bets on who's the father of the bride
- 4 A good excuse for a girls night out
- 3 You can't believe that anyone walks, let alone dances, in platform boots
- 2 Find out how a Swedish band, a Greek island and an Italian show title combine to make an international smash hit musical
- 1 Where else can you enjoy a whopping 15 Top Twenty billboard hits including the #1 chart topper - Dancing Queen?

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