

The Quill

The Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival Newsletter • Summer 2007

The Return of the Shrew

By Catherine Pressimone

No matter the century, the country or the culture, everyone knows a *shrew*.

The very idea of ‘taming’ a shrew instantly elicits a smile. Shakespeare, it is safe to surmise, knew this when he penned *The Taming of the Shrew* in 1593-94.

“As long as there are two sexes, this play will entertain,” says PSF’s Producing Artistic Director Patrick Mulcahy. “Yet through all the raucous comedy, which will be in very capable hands in this production, the play also offers some genuinely touching moments, as these two fascinating, hot-blooded characters tame each other.”

Last seen at PSF in 1998, *The Taming of the Shrew* is one of Shakespeare’s most produced comedies. It also has the distinction of being the first production the first year of the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, the summer of 1992, directed by PSF founder, Gerard J. Schubert, O.S.F.S.

This season it will be directed by long-time festival artist Russell Treyz, who imbued *As You Like It* with zest and exuberance

last summer, and in 2005 took crowds on a rollicking world tour in *Around the World in 80 Days*. Heading the cast are Greg Wood as the swaggering Petruchio and Grace Gonglewski, whose last PSF appearance was in *Henry V* in 2002, and whose previous portrayal of the hot-tempered Katharina in the 1998 production remains one of the most fondly remembered performances in PSF’s history.

Gonglewski has been playing a new role for the past several years—Mom. She has devoted most of her time to her daughter Silvia Mae, who is almost four years old. “I’ve still been working steadily,” Gonglewski assured, “I like to take jobs where I can take my family with me on ‘vacation.’ I’ve done a lot at the Cape May Stage. Last year I worked with Russ [Treyz] on Cape Cod, at the Cape Playhouse in Dennis. I’m also a voiceover artist for radio and television, so I’ve concentrated more energy there.”

This leading lady is as glad to return to PSF as her loyal fans are glad to welcome her, and for many reasons. “I grew up [at PSF]. I got my



Gonglewski



Wood

continued on page 3

A (PENNY) DREADFUL ENCOUNTER



Christopher Patrick Mullen (left) and Brad DePlanche in *Around the World in 80 Days* (2005) Photos by Lee A. Butz

By Catherine Pressimone

A long, foreboding drive wound its way up the hill before me, like a lolling black serpent leading to an expansive mansion perched atop the crest, formidable and dark against the scarlet setting sun.

An odd place to conduct an interview, I mused silently.

But it was here that I had been bitten by Christopher Patrick Mullen and Brad DePlanche, stars of PSF’s production of Charles Ludlam’s 1984 penny dreadful *The Mystery of Irma Vep*. (See sidebars on page 6.)

continued on page 6

NOTES FROM THE PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

There are so many wonderful things happening at PSF. We have a new full-time education director, Erin Mullen, who will help us expand our outreach programs and thereby encourage and inspire the young people in our community. We have again received a prestigious grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and we've enhanced our programming this summer with our new *Prologues* and our Kick Off Cabaret.



Mulcahy

A new strategic plan will go into effect in the fall, aimed at extending the Festival's offerings as a cultural center in our region, expanding the festive nature of the PSF experience, and deepening the Festival's identity as a first-rate professional theatre.

But being in rehearsal again as a director reminds me of the very core of what we aim to do: discover and rediscover the interactions, the common boundaries between art, beauty, and humanity. In rehearsal, we run a scene, and then we stop to talk about a particular moment. Sometimes, I offer a direction, and the actor, in the next run of the scene, not only takes the direction but ingests it, claims it as his or her own, and creates the moment anew, somehow informed by the direction but transformed into art, in and through their instinct, sensitivity, and invention. This new moment lights fires in the other actors in the scene, and a chain reaction begins. Creativity and collaboration at work. Awe-inspiring, beautiful, magical.

We work very hard to find great artists who will illuminate the beauty in and around us, hopefully giving you, our treasured patrons, a life memory in the process.

Patrick Mulcahy

Patrick Mulcahy
Producing Artistic Director

Meet Season Sponsors Linda Lapos & Paul Wirth

The generosity of friends allows the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival to create magic on stage each summer for some 30,000 patrons. This season, it was the specific generosity of two individuals – rather than a corporation or foundation – who gave a leadership gift, thereby becoming the 2007 Season Sponsors.



Photo by Phil Tartagione

Both are lifelong Lehigh Valley residents. Linda graduated from Muhlenberg College and Temple Medical School; she is a colon rectal surgeon and president of the medical staff at Lehigh Valley Hospital. Paul is manager of public relations for PPL Corporation. A journalism graduate of Moravian College, he is a former reporter with *The Morning Call*.

The relationship between the arts and philanthropists like you has a long and rich history. How does your philanthropy reflect your philosophy?

Our philosophy is to give back where we can. We feel fortunate to have the ability to contribute to worthy arts and human service organizations. It's something that gives us great pleasure.

Can you describe your first experience with live theatre? With Shakespeare?

Linda: I remember reading Shakespeare in school, but it didn't really come alive for me until I saw it onstage at the Festival. Recently we attended a couple of performances of Shakespeare plays by the Royal Shakespeare Company in London, but they're no more magical than those at DeSales.

How has your experience with the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival had an impact on your life?

Paul: Over the years, the festival has

become a fixture in our summers – something to look forward to, and something that creates lasting memories. We especially like inviting friends who may be new to the Festival, and we like to watch them as they realize for the first time that this Festival is really something very special.

Many times, the people we bring—even long-time residents of the Lehigh Valley—are surprised that the Festival is a professional company. They often think that the actors are college students. Some are DeSales students, of course, but the caliber of the professional company is equal to anything they could see in New York or Philadelphia.

This is your first year as Season Sponsor, but you have been a past supporter of PSF. What inspired you to become the Season Sponsor this year? Is there anything specific?

Patrick Mulcahy and Jeanne Bitler, PSF's director of development, have a great enthusiasm about the festival, and that's infectious. They are very persuasive. Their point was that season sponsorship doesn't have to be only for corporations; it's realistic for individual sponsors as well. We're hoping that we can help inspire other individuals to do the same in the future.

continued from page 1

I reached the house, and announced my arrival via a grinning gargoyle knocker. The door was opened by a tall, thin maid who ushered me into a room straight out of a gothic novel. A shorter man with a wooden leg had just finished building a fire in the massive hearth. After bowing, he and the woman vanished.

As I waited, I contemplated the portrait of the late, great playwright and actor Charles Ludlam, staring back at me from his vantage over the fireplace. A moment later, I was all too glad to be interrupted by my hosts. They graciously introduced themselves: Mr. Mullen, seen last year as Touchstone in PSF's *As You Like It*, sat to my left, and Mr. DePlanche, who appeared as Passepartout in *Around the World in Eighty Days* in 2005, sat to my right. After exchanging pleasantries, I asked about their work since their previous PSF appearances.

Mr. DePlanche, seemed to barely awaken from a reverie as he responded. "Hmm? I'm sorry, I was distracted by the beauty of your delicate neck...necklace. You don't mind if I sit a little closer do you? Oh, what have I been up to...."

He muttered something about the moon, but he clearly said he had performed in "three productions of *Around the World in Eighty Days* at the Cape Playhouse, Florida Studio Theatre, and Syracuse Stage; as Touchstone in *As You Like It* for the Clarence Brown Theatre Company in Knoxville, in *Art* for the

Hangar Theatre, *What the Butler Saw* for the B Street Theatre Company, a world premiere of Mark Brown's new play *China: The Whole Enchilada*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, both for Orlando Shakespeare Theater." He suddenly announced, "I'm thirsty." I presumed he stepped out for a libation, without asking me if I would like anything to drink.

My eyes met Mr. Mullen's, who scowled.

"Lady Irma would have phrased that question differently," he admonished. "But of course *you* would know nothing of *her*. Perhaps the question ought to be: what would PSF do without *me*??? They'd be lost...do you hear me...Lost!!!" He cackled, but recovered his composure enough to say: "I've done *Splittin the Raft*, *Twelfth Night* (again), *Robinhood* (nude), *Around the World in 80 Days*, and in San Francisco I played a Fed Ex box to great critical acclaim.... Satisfied?" I nodded, nervously. Fortunately, Mr. DePlanche returned, swirling a goblet of red wine.

"So," I inquired, "How do you approach the challenge of portraying a number of characters in a single production?"

"I make a voodoo doll of each one of them," Mr. Mullen replied, producing one from his pocket as he chuckled to himself, "and then I poke - poke - POKE them!!!!" He demonstrated, laughing maniacally. Mr. DePlanche shook his head disapprovingly, then said: "Every throat from

continued on page 6

PSF STAFF

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The Quill is published three times a year by the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival at DeSales University.

EDITOR Lisa Higgins
DESIGN Tom McNamara '92
PHOTOGRAPHY Lee A. Butz

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continued from page 1

feet wet there—and I'm a Central PA gal. The landscape is very heartening for me. I remember when we were doing *A Moon for the Misbegotten* [also in 1998], and I was running on the tracks, and the fields were full of honeysuckle and wild roses.

"There's also such a positive work ethic [at PSF], a spirituality that happens. We're invited to go to Mass...I really enjoy being there. I've missed it."

Petruchio marks Wood's 20th role at PSF—he's performed in 13 of PSF's 16 seasons—immediately following his role as King Leontes in the season opener, *The Winter's Tale*. "Everyone comes back

to PSF to do good work—and there are always good people to work with." Wood said. "I don't know if I stumbled on this place at the right time, but the theatre gods have smiled on me here."

At PSF, Wood has played some of the most renowned roles in Shakespeare's canon, including Richard III and Hamlet, as well as iconic American characters like Jamie Tyrone in *A Moon for the Misbegotten*.

Both actors look forward to working with each other. "It's been a while since we worked together. We've been paired as husband and wife ten or eleven times—I think we're common law by this point," Wood chuckled. Gonglewski cited Wood as the way to make *Shrew*—a challeng-

ing play that is often interpreted as sexist today—accessible for modern audiences.

"Petruchio's a difficult role. I've heard several women say, 'I don't think you can make that [play] work,' but he just makes everyone fall in love with him." Wood added, "Even though it's 'taming of the shrew,' I think what's often missed is that Petruchio learns as much as Kate does—when Kate makes that speech [at the end of the play], it's heartfelt. Petruchio listens and he's saying the same thing."

Perhaps the title of the play could be *The Taming of the Shrews*.

THE ELEMENTS OF DESIGN



SHREW SET DESIGN
BY DANA L. KENN



SHREW COSTUME DESIGN
BY MARLA JURCLANIS



AMADEUS
AMADEUS COSTUME DESIGNS BY LISA L. ZINNI



LEONTES
WINTER'S TALE COSTUME DESIGN
BY ROSEMARIE MCKELVEY

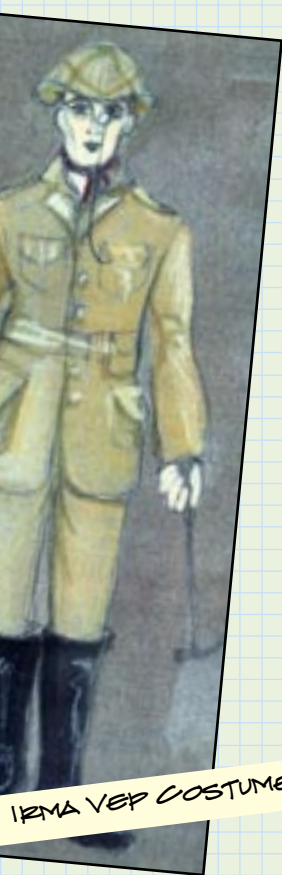


PERDITA

ONE STAGE, THREE DESIGNS



AMATEUS COSTUME DESIGN BY LISA L. ZINNI



IRMA VEP COSTUME DESIGNS BY LISA L. ZINNI



BOB PHILLIPS' SET DESIGNS FOR THE SCHUBERT THEATRE. (FROM TOP) IRMA VEP, 'WINTER'S TALE', AND WINNIE THE POOH.

Photos by Lee A. Buttz

CHARLES LUDLAM (1943–1987)

was a multitalented actor, playwright, director, and producer whose Ridiculous Theatrical Company broke boundaries and helped define the avant garde off-off Broadway movement. Born in Floral Park, New York and educated at Hofstra University, he first acted professionally in New York in 1967 with the Playhouse of the Ridiculous where some of his plays were performed. Later that year he founded his own troupe and over the next twenty years, the company emerged from obscurity with a campy cult fol-

lowing to citywide admiration. Ludlam usually played the leading role (male or female) in his outrageous spoofs, although as time went by he employed less camp and more of a highly theatrical style. Perhaps his Marguerite Gautier in *Camille* (1974) was the role most identified with Ludlam. His play, *The Mystery of Irma Vep* (1984), is his most revived in theatres across the country. Biography: *Ridiculous! The Theatrical Life and Times of Charles Ludlam*, David Kaufman, 2002.

continued from page 1

which I drink, a bite...rather, I mean a bit, of the victim's personality remains." Contemplating his empty glass, he moved his chair closer to mine.

I found my gaze drawn once again to the portrait over the mantel. Mr. DePlanche noticed. "Lean closer my pet; I'll tell you a little secret for that article in *The Quill*," he whispered. "Mr. Ludlam and his Theatre of the Ridiculous were masterful at playing off the greats, and this play has many identifiable references lifted from Shakespeare, Chekhov, Dickens -- and the kind of horror archetypes that haunt men's souls.

"When Mr. Ludlam first brought me into his fold, I was thrilled at the thought of becoming multiple characters, but the challenge is recreating the classic moments with real authenticity." He sighed, toasting Ludlam's likeness with his empty glass.

At this point, Mr. Mullen slowly rose to his feet, a seething smirk creeping across his face. "But that's just it, don't you see? It takes serious work to play so many roles...to play comedy. BUT no one takes me seriously! Those people at PSF will wish they had!" He collapsed in another fit of frenzied laughter. Several minutes later, with the help of a glass of red wine procured by Mr. DePlanche, Mr. Mullen had regained his composure and our conversation resumed.

Given the circumstances, I reluctantly posed my next question: "Have you had any experiences that might inform your roles in *Irma Vep*?" Mr. Mullen nearly

barked. "Are you mad? If I had *experience* as a werewolf, do you think I would be an actor? And vampires get no respect these days! Don't you dare be so foolish: we'll lock you in a tower with the bats before you can say...Nosferatu. Now these questions grow tiresome."

Nervous, I turned to Mr. DePlanche, who sat silently for a long moment. "No comment," he said.

Clearly, it was time to make like a mummy and wrap things up. I stood to thank Mr. DePlanche and Mr. Mullen, but the latter painfully grasped my hand, as the former closed in behind me. "Wait, my dear. Don't you know? The article was just a disguise. You were sent to be the caretaker here, my sweet one...." I was caught! Mr. DePlanche leaned close to me as the two actors propelled me toward the kitchen, with Mr. Mullen asking, "Won't you join us for dinner?"

At the moment Mr. DePlanche began to reply the full moon began shining eerily through the window. With a hasty "Excuse me," he vanished. I whirled to defend myself from Mr. Mullen's certain attack, but he had also disappeared. Seizing my opportunity for escape, I grabbed my notes and glanced back at Mr. Ludlam's portrait. I definitely saw him wink.

Descending the drive, I turned on my windshield wipers to eliminate some muddy paw prints and claw marks.

For a life in the theatre, it's all in a day's work.

Penny Parts

The penny part stories got underway in the 1830s, originally as a cheap alternative to books for the working class adults, but by the 1850s the serial stories were aimed exclusively at teenagers. The stories themselves were reprints or sometimes rewrites of Gothic thrillers, as well as new stories about famous criminals.

Some of the most famous of these penny part stories were *The String of Pearls* (which ostensibly introduced Sweeny Todd), *The Mysteries of London*, inspired by the French serial, *The Mysteries of Paris*, and *Varney the Vampire*. *Black Bess or the Knight of the Road*, outlining the largely imaginary exploits of real-life highwayman Dick Turpin, continued for 254 episodes.

Penny Dreadfuls

In 1866, *Boys of England* was introduced as a new type of publication, an eight page magazine that featured serial stories as well as articles and shorts of interests. Printed on the same cheap paper, it featured a larger format than the penny parts.

Numerous competitors quickly followed, with such titles as *Boy's Leisure Hour*, *Boys Standard*, *Young Men of Great Britain*, etc. As the price and quality of fiction was the same, these storypapers also fell under the general definition of Penny Dreadfuls (also known as *Penny Bloods* or *Blood and Thunders* in their early days).

American dime novels were edited and rewritten for a British audience. These appeared in booklet form, such as the *Boy's First Rate Pocket Library*. Frank Reade, Buffalo Bill and Deadwood Dick were all popular with the Penny Dreadful audience.

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/> ("Penny Dreadful." *Wikipedia*. Date Updated or Website Copyright. Wikimedia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penny_dreadful>).

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The Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival receives state arts funding support through a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

Rural, Inner-City Schools Benefit from NEA Grant to PSF

PSF ONE OF 35 COMPANIES NATIONWIDE TO RECEIVE FUNDING

With the resolve to take the Bard where the Bard has never been, the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival at DeSales University recently achieved two milestones: the hiring of a full-time Education Director, Erin Mullen, and funding from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to expand PSF's annual Linny Fowler WillPower Tour.

"The combination of these two achievements allows us to provide greater access to Shakespeare – one of the world's greatest dramatists," says Patrick Mulcahy, producing artistic director.

The Linny Fowler WillPower tour, the cornerstone of PSF's outreach program, has served 15 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties since the tour was founded in 2000. The \$25,000 NEA grant will allow PSF's fall 2007 tour to include up to 12 new rural or inner city schools in 12 Pennsylvania counties previously unreached by the NEA's Shakespeare in American Communities/ Shakespeare for a New Generation program, now in its fifth year.

"We have a track record for reaching underserved student populations in underfunded schools that serve a culturally diverse, economically challenged student body. Consistent with our status as the official Shakespeare Festival of the

Commonwealth, we now have the opportunity to reach much deeper into the state with this powerful programming."

The fall 2006 tour of Hamlet, which was directed by Ms. Mullen, was fully booked and performed for 8,500 students and educators. The fall 2007 tour will feature Macbeth, again with Mullen directing. "With the NEA support, we are laying the groundwork for PSF's ultimate goal of expanding WillPower to a state-wide, nine-month program," she says.

Mullen is new to the job, but no stranger to PSF. The current season is her eighth. In addition to last year's *Hamlet* tour, she directed and choreographed the Green Show and directed *Winnie the Pooh* this summer.

According to Mulcahy, "Erin is that rare person who excels at both artistry and administration. She brings great passion and clarity to her new role at PSF, and she will have the Festival's full support in carrying our expanding education programming to new heights."



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Steve Burns as Amadeus. Photo by Lee A. Butz

Inside this Issue

- A "SHREW" STORY
- A DREADFUL ENCOUNTER
- ELEMENTS OF DESIGN



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