
Opera: A Young Person's Game

The life of opera singers is not all curtain calls and roses. Sooner or later they lose their gift, and then what? Placido Domingo is worth an estimated \$200 million, but Luciano Pavarotti reportedly died £12 million in debt.

Because indigent artists are nothing new, Giuseppe Verdi founded Casa di Riposo per Musicisti in Milan in 1896 to shelter elderly singers who had not been favored by fortune, or who, when they were young, did not have the virtue of saving their money. "Poor and dear companions of my life!" Verdi called them.

In like fashion, when British accompanist Ivor Newton died at age eighty-nine in 1982, he left his Bromley estate outside London for the establishment of a 21-bed musicians' retirement home. Such a home is the setting for *Quartet*. In this story of four stars elbowing for respect in the wake of personal tragedies for which they find themselves unrehearsed, they agree to reunite for a "performance" of their celebrated quartet from Verdi's *Rigoletto*, universally acknowledged as one of the ten greatest operas ever written.

Combining unforgettable music with a compelling story, this tale stars the evil Duke of Mantua, a womanizer who puts even certain politicians-in-the-news to shame. His deformed jester and accomplice, Rigoletto, leads a secret double life as a heartless bully by day and devoted father by night. So when his innocent daughter, Gilda, succumbs to the Duke's artifice, he plans his assassination, but first discloses to Gilda her paramour's duplicity with the assassin's sister, Maddalena.

The climactic quartet has father and daughter spying on the Duke as he implores Maddalena: *Lovely child of pleasure, I'm a slave to your charms. With only one kind word, you can ease all my pain. Come feel how wildly my heart is beating.* Maddalena in turn, her bosom spilling over her corset, perhaps straddling him on the bed, taunts: *You make me laugh. Talk is cheap. I see through your little game.* Prim Gilda meanwhile sobs: *He spoke to me of love, too. And I believed that unscrupulous man. My unhappy heart has been betrayed. Now it is breaking with anguish.* Rigoletto consoles: *Quiet. Tears are useless.* Their tapestry of sound is unmatched for dramatic finesse, which is what opera is all about. It's a vigorous workout for singers in their prime, and therefore a young person's métier.

There are no good roles for the elderly; Methuselah, the Opera hasn't been written yet. One notable exception to the rule of youth was Spanish tenor Alfredo Kraus, who retained his trim figure and glorious high D's well into his sixties, playing the Duke of Mantua opposite the likes of Beverly Sills and Joan Sutherland. Pancreatic cancer at age 72 finally stopped him, though some say he died of a broken heart following his wife's passing two years earlier when he took an unprecedented eight-month break. Pavarotti died of the same illness at the same age, a hulking version of his former self, but still sounding glorious. Had he lived another decade, might he have gone to live at Casa Verdi, as the Milan home is also called, a place he supported with numerous charitable performances?

The great tragedy 120 years after Verdi's death is that the world still undervalues artists. The Bromley Home closed for financial reasons after just 28 years, listed at a mere £1,225,000.

BY JANE ELKIN



JANUARY 12 – FEBRUARY 4, 2018

2017/2018 season



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year!

While the temperature outside is dropping, things are just heating up around here.

Every year our Artistic Team volunteers pore over hundreds of scripts – drama, comedy, classics, new works, musicals – you name it, and they are reading them. These volunteers peruse, discuss, debate, and work tirelessly to bring together a slate of shows we believe will entertain you. Sometimes our patrons feel we knocked it out of the park, and sometimes we're told we were a bit wide of the mark. The funny thing is, we often do both on the same show.

We understand that not every show is each person's cup of tea, but as artists, we strive to produce shows that not only entertain, but challenge your thinking as well. We want to help expand what you think theater "should" be.

Though there are still four shows left in this season, we're already planning for next season – our 70th! You are invited to join us for our Sneak Peek of the new season on Saturday, February 3, 10 a.m., to get a glimpse of what we'll be presenting on the stage next year. If you're interested in becoming more involved with our theater family, our Executive Producer's meeting will immediately follow the Sneak Peek. But even if you're not able to join us, please continue to let us know what you think. We read your emails and letters, and we appreciate you letting us know how we're doing.

Bundle up, stay warm, and enjoy the show!

– SHIRLEY PANEK

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Noted opera composer portraits giclées, Carol Youmans.
Portraits in the theater left to right: Gioachino Rossini, Wolfgang Mozart,
Giacomo Puccini, Giuseppe Verdi, and Gaetano Donizetti

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Colonial Players gratefully acknowledges the generous bequest from Roland Riley, a longtime patron whose gift helps ensure the future economic viability of our theater.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

"Youth is the gift of nature, but age is a work of art."

--- Stanislaw Jerzy Lec

What is it about art – of any kind, whether it be music or drama or painting – that takes us out of ourselves while at the same time showing us who we really are? To me, it's the uniqueness with which art is created. An individual, a single mind, is inspired, that inspiration mixes with the individual's personality and beliefs and energy and skill to become a song, or a play, or a mural. Often the artist cannot even explain how it was done, there's something else going on – the whole is so much greater than the sum of its parts.

In choral singing, that same effect is felt when two or three perfectly sung notes create a separate note that hangs in the air. No one voice is singing that note, but the combination of voices generates it. So it is with life, and aging, and the quartet of characters you will watch tonight. In their prime, decades ago, each would sing one note, and the combination of the four notes between them created not just four notes, but a story, animating the feelings and passions of the composer who created what they were

singing. Their most popular opera, recently re-released on CD here in our 1990s setting, is Verdi's *Rigoletto*.

With these four characters, playwright Ronald Harwood gives us what most great operas and most great lifetimes provide: the wide spectrum of friendship, loneliness, love, physical and mental impairment, sexual desire, vanities. The characters are as different as the four seasons. It is those differences that made them a success on stage, and that pepper their current relationships. They bicker about the past, their circumstances, and each other, but they also perform quiet kindnesses that are touching and loving. They talk of music, backstage romps, childhood, loss, arias, and lusting in their hearts and their loins. As Bette Davis once remarked, "Old age ain't no place for sissies."

No longer able to physically perform, they still feel the music and the passion, they still can hear that note hanging in the air, and we watch entranced as their story becomes the work of art that is age.

– DARICE CLEWELL

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR



Quartet is the fifth production **DARICE CLEWELL** has directed for The Colonial Players. Previously she directed *Trying*, *Copenhagen*, *Is There Life After High School?*, and *Isn't It Romantic*. Direction at other theaters includes *Art*, *Stones in His Pockets*, and *The Shadow Box* at Dignity Players. Choreographic endeavors include *A Little Night Music* (the Ruby Griffith winner for All Round Production Excellence), *She Loves Me*, *Cabaret*, *Fiorello!*, *Is There Life After High School?*, *Red Hot and Cole*, *Working*, and *A Christmas Carol*.

Darice has appeared in numerous productions here, playing Marie in *Calendar Girls* and Sonia in *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* last

year. Other favorite CP roles include Lottie in *Enchanted April* and M'Lynn in *Steel Magnolias*. She also appeared in *Lettice and Lovage*, *Splendour*, *Rumors*, *Social Security*, and *The Road to Mecca*. Acting credits at other theaters include Elizabeth Proctor in *The Crucible*, Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie*, Latrelle in *Sordid Lives*, and several roles in *The Vagina Monologues*.

"*Quartet* is a Director Package show, meaning I presented it to the play selection committee last year and asked to direct it. I am very grateful for this opportunity, and hope our audiences will be as charmed by this play as I have been. Thank you to our quartet -- Nori, Marti, Rick, and Edd. It's been a joy bringing this *Quartet* to life. And thank you to my duet partner, Jim."

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

RONALD HARWOOD, a successful and decorated English playwright and author, was born in South Africa and moved in 1945 to England, where he changed his name from Horwitz after being told his birth name was too foreign and too Jewish for an actor. His best-known work is *The Dresser*, which opened in New York in 1981 and was nominated for a Tony Award for best play. Harwood also wrote the screenplay for the movie, which received Academy Award nominations for best movie and best screenplay. He won the Academy Award for his screenplay of *The Pianist* and was nominated for best screenplay for *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*. In all, Harwood

has written 24 plays and 19 movie scripts. He is also the author of more than 30 books and other published works. Harwood trained for the stage at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and was the personal dresser for Sir Donald Wolfit from 1953 to 1958. One of the recurring themes in Harwood's work is his fascination for the stage, its performing artists, and artisans as displayed in *The Dresser*, *After the Lions* (about Sarah Bernhardt), *Another Time* (a semi-autobiographical piece about a gifted South African pianist), *Quartet* (about aging opera singers), and his non-fiction book *All the World's a Stage*, a general history of theatre.

As you read biographies in this and other Colonial Players programs, you will often see references to WATCH Awards and the Ruby Griffith Award, and you may wonder what that means. These are the two major competitions for community theaters in the Washington area, and we are proud of the recognition accorded to our directors, actors, and technical people by judges who view our work in our theater. Over the last five years, CP has won five of the 10 awards for best production of a play presented by the two groups.

WATCH is the acronym for Washington Area Theatre Community Honors, a consortium of community theaters in the Maryland and Virginia suburbs of Washington. Each play of the season is adjudicated by judges from other community theaters. The award for best production of a play was presented to *Going to St. Ives* in 2012 and to *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, which was honored last March as the best of 69 plays presented by 27 community theaters. There have been numerous other WATCH awards and nominations for individual achievement for actors, directors, and technical designers.

The Ruby Griffith Awards are presented annually by The British Players, originally The British Embassy Players, to honor community theater achievement in the Washington area. Each group chooses one play for each season to be assessed by four adjudicators from The British Players. Recent CP shows chosen as the best production of a play were *Shipwrecked!* in 2013, *The Liar* in 2015, and *Venus in Fur* in 2016.

While awards are important, our many volunteers will continue to work hard to provide high-quality theater for our audiences, which has been the main goal of Colonial Players for 69 years. Thanks for your support.



THE STAFF (continued)



JOHN PURNELL

(Lighting Designer)

John began lighting work at CP in 1993 with *Rebel Armies Deep Into Chad* and went on to win two lighting awards for *Driving Miss Daisy* and *Road to Mecca*. He lit *Isn't It Romantic* at CP for Darice Clewell in a snowy January in 1996, and last winter assisted on *Calendar Girls*. He designed the lights for Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre's 50th Anniversary show and for this year's fundraiser, *Light Up the Stars*. Onstage at CP, John performed the role of Colonel Mustard in *Clue: The Musical* last summer and appeared in this summer's festival of short plays in *If Men Played Cards As Women Do*. John's return to theater is enabled by his terrific wife, Claire, and by the fact that his two daughters did, in fact, grow up and leave.



JIM REITER

(Sound Designer)

Jim most recently appeared as Vanya in CP's production of *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* playing opposite *Quartet's* esteemed director. He received a Washington Area Theatre Community Honors best director nomination for 2015's *Side Man* and won the WATCH Award for his multiple character performance in *Hauptmann*. Other CP appearances include *A Christmas Carol*, *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, *Moonlight and Magnolias*, *Dog Logic*, *She Loves Me*, *Proof*, and *Driving Miss Daisy*. He appeared in Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre's *The Addams Family*, and directed *The 39 Steps* at Dignity Players, where he performed in *Sordid Lives*, *The Crucible*, and *The Shadowbox*. Other local appearances include Annapolis Shakespeare's *Pride and Prejudice* and Bay Theatre's *Becky's New Car*. At 2nd Star Productions in Bowie, Jim directed *1776*, *The Music Man*, *Once Upon a Mattress*, and *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*.

ABOUT OUR NEXT PLAY

Sex with Strangers, which opens February 23, takes a comedic look at relationships in the digital age. Olivia is a fortyish novelist who supports herself by teaching. Her only book met with a dismal reception, and she has retreated to a remote bed-and-breakfast to reflect on her life and her hopes for becoming a successful novelist. Her solitude is broken by the arrival of Ethan, a twenty-something star sex blogger who achieved fame by chronicling his sexual conquests. Olivia is his literary idol, and he has tracked her to her snowy retreat. As the relationship between Olivia and Ethan develops, they discover that each craves what the other possesses. Attraction turns to sex, and they must confront the dark side of ambition and the trouble of reinventing oneself when the past is only a click away. The New York production of Laura Eason's two-character comedy was a hit with critics. *The New Yorker* praised it as a thoughtful comedy about privacy and publicity that offers resonant observations about how technology both eases and complicates relationships. A critic for the *Daily News* wrote: "Just like a page-turner, this smart comedy pulls you in and keeps you wondering what's coming next...well-crafted, with sly wit and pitch perfect dialogue." And *The Hollywood Reporter* described it as "a hell of a lot of fun!" *Sex with Strangers* runs February 23 through March 16, with performances Thursday through Sunday. Tickets are available at thecolonialplayers.org or by calling 410-268-7373.



THE CAST (continued)

Miss Daisy, She Loves Me, Our Town, A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum, The Trip To Bountiful and Inherit The Wind. As a writer for theater, he has authored several plays and musicals, notably the adaptation and lyrics for the musical version of Dickens' A Christmas Carol (music by Dick Gessner), presented by Players for the more than 30 years. He has

directed for several area community, college, and professionals theaters over the years. He is an infrequent actor on the East Street stage, having last appeared here as Charlie in the 1987 production of *The Foreigner*. Rick is particularly proud that his daughter, Sarah Wade, and her husband, Eric Hufford, are active Colonial Players members, both onstage and behind the scenes.



THE STAFF



KAELYNN BEDSWORTH

(Producer)

This is Kaelynn's ninth season with CP, and she has volunteered both on the stage and off in a variety of roles, from actress to go-button pusher to steampunk wig maker to Looney Tunes sound effects specialist to smushed banana cleaner. You may have seen her grace the stage in *The Secret Garden*, *Annie, 1776*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Moonlight and Magnolias*, and more. Behind the scenes, she has produced, costume designed, sound designed, and scene painted for many shows over the last few years. Kaelynn currently serves as Treasurer on The Colonial Players' Board of Directors. She sends love to her husband, Wes, who shares this crazy theater world with her on a daily basis.



DOUG DAWSON

(Set Designer)

Doug has designed sets for more than 20 shows at CP, including *All the Way Home*; *House of Blue Leaves*; several versions of *A Christmas Carol*; *Red, Hot and Blue*; *A Little Night Music* (Ruby Griffith Award winner); *Angel Street* and *Cabaret* (both Colonial Players award winners); *The Robber Bridegroom*; *Splendor*; *The Unexpected Guest*; *Arcadia*; *Of Mice and Men*; and *Mrs. California*. Doug also has been music director for several shows. He is a hairdresser by trade and has lent his skills to many period shows on our stage.



HERB ELKIN

(Stage Manager)

Herb has been a CP member and frequent volunteer for over 20 years. He began his theater journey onstage in several CP and other area productions, but found his true calling behind the scenes in a variety of roles. As CP's immediate past Vice President and former Treasurer, Herb continues to serve on several committees, but most enjoys his stints as stage manager. Recent stage managing credits include *33 Variations* (2017), *Nine* (2017), *Good People* (2016), *Side Man* (2015), *Rocket Man* (2014), *Coyote on a Fence* (2014), *Trying* (2013), and *Going to St. Ives* (2012), which received a regional WATCH award as outstanding play. He thanks CP's many volunteers and patrons who make everything possible and worthwhile. By day Herb directs information technology services at the Naval Academy.



JOANN GIDOS

(Properties Designer)

JoAnn had a busy fall working on *33 Variations* at The Colonial Players and *The Liar* and *Inherit the Wind* at Compass Rose Theater. She also assisted Ron Giddings at Severn School with *One Man, Two Guvnors* and at Compass Rose with *Fiddler on the Roof*. In the future she will be working at CP on *Lucky Stiff* and at Severn School on *Chaplin*. So much for cutting back.



THE CAST



EDD MILLER

(Wilfred Bond)

Edd has been hanging around The Colonial Players for more than 50 years waiting for a role like this one -- over 70 and still vibrant! While waiting, he has put his artistic talents to work in many areas of the theater. As an actor, CP shows include *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *A Thousand Clowns*, *Othello*, *The Happy Time*, *The Fantasticks*, *The Last of the Red Hot Lovers*, *Absurd Person Singular*, *Veronica's Room*, *A View from the Bridge*, *Over the River and Through the Woods*, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, *Over My Dead Body, 1776*, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, *Incorruptible*, and *Death of a Salesman*. He has directed for Colonial Players *The Apple Tree*, *Plaza Suite*, *I Never Sang for My Father* (Ruby Griffith Award winner), *Blythe Spirit*, *6 Rms Riv Vu*, *Carnival!*, *The Curious Savage*, *On Golden Pond*, *Relatively Speaking*, *Moon Over Buffalo*, *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife*, *Two Rooms*, *Coyote on a Fence* (WATCH Award nominee), *Going to St. Ives* (WATCH Award winner), *The Diviners*, and *Good People*. He has also designed sets for many shows at CP. Edd feels blessed because he has gotten far more out of his association with The Colonial Players than he has put in, most importantly because that is where he met his late wife, Dolores Fahey Miller. He has worked with many other theaters, but Colonial Players is home. "Thank you all."



NORI MORTON

(Cecily Robson)

Nori began her theatrical adventures 36 years ago when she auditioned for Colonial Players' first musical production of *A Christmas Carol* under the direction of Rick Wade (Reggie). Aside from the privilege of singing the masterful Gessner/Wade score, she was assigned ONE speaking line, and of course it required a British accent. After reciting it hundreds of times, night & day, it's befitting that, after all these years, she's now onstage with Rick, trying ye olde British chit-chat yet again! Among numerous leading roles locally, her faves here at CP are Desiree Armfeldt in

A Little Night Music, Mrs. Hart for *Baby* (both Ruby Griffith award winners), and Linda Porter for *Red Hot and Cole*. Nori recently portrayed the ever meddling Dolly Levi in 2nd Star Productions' *Hello Dolly!* and most recently created and performed alongside good bud Debbie Barber-Eaton in *Rhapsody In Heels*, a two-women cabaret. Thanks and love to Darice (for taking a chance!), to this over-the-moon ensemble, and for faith, family, and friends who keep her facing each new day chiming, "I'm ready!"



MARTI POGONOWSKI

(Jean Horton)

Marti's association with Colonial Players is a long one. She first appeared in the ensemble of *Carousel*, then as Anne in *The Diary of Anne Frank*, both in 1969. Over the years, she has taken on a number of roles on our stage, including Hypatia in *Misalliance*; Lucy in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*; The Mute in *The Fantasticks*; Masha in *The Seagull*; Joy in *Shadowlands*; Martha in *Strange Snow*; Gert in *Lost In Yonkers*; ensemble in *Jacques Brel...*; Mother/Judge in *Kid Purple*; The Dresser in *Enter the Guardsman*; and -- most recently -- Annie in *Calendar Girls*. She was also a winner of the Irene Ryan Acting Award, which earned her a place in competition at the Kennedy Center, where she was thrilled to use Jane Alexander's dressing room. Other favorite roles include: Nurse Ratched in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*; "The Crowd" (where she portrayed all of the members of the Chorus) in *The Wizard of Id* at the University of Maryland; and Gooch in *Mame* and *Mazepa* in *Gypsy* at the Annapolis Dinner Theater. Marti recently retired as an executive director with Anne Arundel County Public Schools and enjoys traveling with her husband, Dan.



RICHARD WADE

(Reginald Paget)

Rick has been a member of CP for nearly 50 years, working most frequently as director of nearly 30 productions, including dramas, comedies, and musicals. Among his favorites: *Morning's At Seven*, *Amadeus*, *Driving*

THE COLONIAL PLAYERS, INC.
presents



Written by
RONALD HARWOOD

Directed by
DARICE CLEWELL

THE CAST
(in order of appearance)

Reginald Paget.....Richard Wade
Cecily Robson.....Nori Morton
Wilfred Bond.....Edd Miller
Jean Horton.....Marti Pogonowski

TIME
The 1990s

PLACE
The solarium in an English country house in Kent

There will be one intermission between Act I and Act II.

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