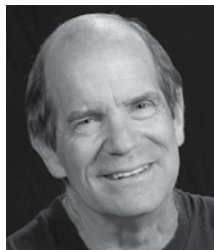
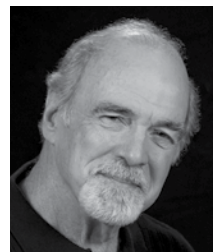


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ARSENIC AND OLD LACE



SEPTEMBER 13 TO OCTOBER 5

2019/2020 season



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thecolonialplayers.org

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's nearly fall, and time to kickoff our 71st season at The Colonial Players!

Summer is always a busy time for folks around town, but I hope you had the chance to join us for the two special events we held.

In July, The Colonial Players and Historic Annapolis co-hosted two screenings of the Smithsonian documentary *The Day We Walked on the Moon* – celebrating the 50th anniversary of our amazing space achievement.

For the first weekend of August, audiences enjoyed *Generations*, a series of one-acts penned by three of our very own Colonial Players family – Stephen Evans (*Monuments*), Morey Norkin (*Last Laugh*), and Michael Gilles (*Late Nights in Cars*). *Last Laugh*, directed by Rick Wade, will compete in the 2020 Maryland Community Theatre One-Act Festival (held January 17-29, 2020). We wish the cast all the best – and I'll be sure to keep you updated on their progress!

And finally, I wanted to take a moment to honor two long-time members we lost over the summer – Dick Gessner and Dick Whaley. Dick Gessner was a popular entertainer, music director, and theater composer, and many of our theatergoers know him best for his music for Colonial Players' holiday tradition, *A Christmas Carol*. He was a friend and member of The Colonial Players for over 40 years.

Dick Whaley devoted more than 65 years to volunteering for The Colonial Players. He served on the Board of Directors numerous times and was a genius behind the scenes – leading the set construction team, building and designing set pieces that are still used onstage today. You may have recognized him (and his wife, Cathy) as a box office volunteer. It's difficult to fully articulate how his dedication and service helped shape the organization. We mourn his loss.

– SHIRLEY PANEK

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director.....Dave Carter
Assistant Director.....Jeff Mocho
Producer.....Judi Wobensmith
Stage Manager.....Shirley Panek
Set Designer.....Eric Hufford
Properties Designer.....Lois Banscher
Costume Designer.....Drea Lynn
Lighting Designers.....Ernie Morton, Paul Webster
Sound Designer.....David Cooper
Makeup/Hair Designer.....Pam Peach
Assistant Stage Manager.....Emilie Holmstock
Stage Crew.....Hannah Housley
Lead Carpenter.....Ted Yablonski
Carpenters.....Tom Dicken, Norm James, Ken Kaiser, Bob Mumper, Jim Robinson,
Greg Anderson, Eric Hufford, Jeff Mocho
Set Decoration.....Amy Atha-Nicholls
Set Decoration Assistants.....Greg Anderson, George Arnold, Kaitlin Arnold,
Parker Carroll, Dave Carter, Sophia Carter, Eric Hufford, Edd Miller, Jeff Mocho,
Bill Reagan, Mark Stout, Tom Stuckey, Beth Terranova, Steve Tobin, Sarah Wade
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Lighting Assistants.....Jeff Mocho, Shirley Panek
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DIRECTOR'S NOTES

In directing what may be my last show for a long time at The Colonial Players, as I will be moving to the great state of Washington next year and eventually back to my home state of Montana, I knew I wanted to do something big. So what better way than to take on one of the all-time classic comedies from the 1940s. Farce is my ultimate favorite genre, and what I love about *Arsenic and Old Lace* is that it is the type of comedy that is, as I like to call it, "almost farce." It lingers just below the edge of farce but has boundaries that you can't cross as you can in a true farce. The characters are extraordinary characters in an ordinary situation who don't know they are extraordinary. The Brewsters have lived with insanity in the family so long that to them, this is just how family life is, and their world colliding with the real world creates a comedy that is unto itself hilarious.

As a director, I didn't want to do the same old *Arsenic* as it has been done over and over again, and I challenged myself to try to find a way to make it different while not destroying the classic comedy loved by so many. My first thought was maybe using the style of acting found in many

1940s films, more like what we have come to call, as a cast and crew, "acting with manners." As I lay one night thinking about it, I fell into slumber, only to awaken the next morning, open my eyes, and say aloud, literally, "Oh my God. That's It." Who knew that in order to refresh a classic you could go retro instead of modernizing it, yet use modern technology in order to do so. What you will see tonight is a vision of one and a collaboration of many. I learned more as a director on this project than I ever had before. I learned what I can and can't ask of a crew, and I learned to push back when I was told something was not possible. Without them and their talents and patience and imagination, I could never have pulled off this huge undertaking. I am so proud of everyone who has worked on this show and brought my dream to life. The power of one may be great, but the power of many can move mountains.

So sit back, relax, get ready to laugh out loud and be transported back to a time when black and white ruled the big screen.

— DAVE CARTER

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR



DAVE CARTER is excited to be back directing the opening show of the season for The Colonial Players. He is honored and humbled and couldn't be more pleased to be directing the classic *Arsenic and Old Lace*. Dave trained with Citrus Theatre as well as the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) and has been seen on the CP stage in shows such as *Communicating Doors*, *A Few Good Men*, and, most recently, as "The Stiff" in *Lucky Stiff*. He also assistant directed

Taking Steps, *Boeing Boeing*, and *The Liar*, a Ruby Griffith Award winner. Dave's most recent directorial accomplishments were *The Cripple of Inishmaan* and *Sex with Strangers*. Dave would like to acknowledge his all-star cast and crew. He could not imagine going into the production that he would have a chance to work with a group of people so amazingly talented. It has truly been a pleasure. Lastly, Dave sends out a very special thank you to his family and friends for encouraging him in the craft he loves and for understanding, "I can't. I Have Rehearsal."

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

JOSEPH OTTO KESSELING was an American playwright best known for *Arsenic and Old Lace*, a hit comedy that ran for 1,444 performances on Broadway from 1941 to 1944. Kesselring was born in New York City in 1902 and spent much of his life in and around the theater. After a two-year stint as a vocal music teacher at Bethel College, he left that Mennonite institution and began working as a freelance playwright in 1933. He completed 12

original plays, four of which were produced on Broadway: *There's Wisdom in Women*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *Four Twelves Are 48*, and *Mother of That Wisdom*. *Arsenic and Old Lace* was an international hit, running for 1,337 performances in London, and became a staple on the high school, community, and dinner theater circuits. The movie version, released in 1944, was also a comedy hit.

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



The Colonial Players gratefully acknowledges the recent gift from the Donald M. Reed Living Trust that made possible the critical upgrade of our stage lighting control system.



THE CAST



BERNADETTE ARVIDSON (Abby Brewster)

Bernadette has been performing for many years in countless shows and thoroughly enjoys the beautiful ride that is: Live Theatre!

Bern was last seen onstage at The Colonial Players as Dottie in *Good People*. Some of her favorite roles include Rita in *Educating Rita*, Belinda in *Noises Off*, and Juanita in *Sordid Lives*, a role that garnered her a Washington Area Theatre Community Honors Award for Outstanding Featured Actress in a play. Bernie thanks the cast and crew for working diligently all summer, rehearsing and preparing the show for the pleasure of the Annapolis community. "We do it for you! Break a leg, my friends, and enjoy the show! "Nana dedicates this performance to her beautiful new grandson, Ben.



DANN ALAGNA (Mortimer Brewster)

Originally from New York but raised in South Florida, Dann first found the stage at age 12-ish and never looked back! Dann has performed

in over 30 community theater productions and is thrilled to be back in-the-round for the sixth time! Past CP credits include *Rumors*, *33 Variations*, *Earth and Sky*, and *It's a Wonderful Life* in addition to his WATCH-nominated turn as Zed the Village Idiot in *Cinderella Waltz*. Non CP credits include *Cheaper by the Dozen*, *Grease*, *Greetings*, and *Hot L Baltimore*. Dann is the director of Free Range Improv in Annapolis, winner of three consecutive Rammie Awards from Rams Head Onstage for best comedy show of the year. Dann is grateful to be included on the stage with such an amazing ensemble cast and thanks Director Dave Carter for this opportunity and for his friendship. Dann dedicates this performance to his parents, Phil and Diane, who will be coming from Florida to be in the audience. "Momm and Dadd, you did everything right! I love you!" For Carol and Dick, thank you."



BILL DECK (Officer Brophy)

Bill has performed in four productions with The Colonial Players and was last seen here as the light-hearted Captain Whittaker in *A*

Few Good Men in 2014. Since 2002, he has appeared with Dignity Players in Permanent Collection and performed with the Tred Avon Players in productions

of *The Rainmaker* and *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*. Bill believes that acting feeds the soul, and he looks forward to performing with a yet another wonderful cast. He would like to thank Elizabeth Schiro for help and support in creating Officer Brophy. "Thank you to Dave Carter and The Colonial Players for this opportunity."



JOHN HALMI (Teddy Brewster)

John is excited to return to The Colonial Players, where he played the title role in *Shipwrecked! The Amazing Adventures of Louis de Rougemont* (as *Told by Himself*), Bobby in *Company*, and Valmont in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*. Other local credits include *Kiss Me, Kate* (General Howell, Live Arts Maryland); *Once Upon a Mattress* (Dauntless, Live Arts Maryland); *The Last Five Years* (Jamie, Dignity Players); and *Mr. Marmalade* (Bradley, Standing O Productions). John has performed in several productions with City Center's acclaimed *Encores! Series* in New York City and has also been seen at Carnegie Hall, the Goodspeed Opera House, Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera, and on London's West End. He is a graduate of The University of Michigan's musical theater program. When not on the stage, John is a mathematics teacher for Anne Arundel County Public Schools. "Thanks, as always, to Dave for his incredible support and love."



LARRY LEVINSON (Mr. Gibbs/Lt. Rooney)

Arsenic and Old Lace marks Larry's debut at The Colonial Players. A 30-year veteran of the Washington-Baltimore theater scene, he most recently appeared as Jefferson Davis in *Black Confederates* in both the DC and Baltimore Fringe Festivals (with Colonial Players President Shirley Panek). His favorite roles include Aaronow (*Glengarry Glen Ross*), Paul Grunman (*Mother, May I*), Abe Moscovitz (*The Interview*), Frank (*Detroit*, Best Baltimore Small Theater production, 2015), and, best of all, a dead theater critic (*The Real Inspector Hound*). "Jeff and Shirley – Love yooz guys."



STEVE MANGUM (Officer O'Hara)

Steve is thrilled to return to The Colonial Players in one of his favorite plays of all time. A familiar face in local theater, he



THE STAFF (continued)

and *Magnolias*, and 2012 WATCH nominee *Chapter Two* - all at Colonial Players. Love to J, A, & E.



PAM PEACH (Makeup/Hair Designer)

Pam is no stranger to The Colonial Players, having worked here as both an actor and wig and makeup designer. After an absence from

the arts of almost 10 years, she is happy to return to her roots. Previously a staff wig designer for Olney Theatre and Toby's Dinner Theatre, she also designed or maintained wigs and makeup for the Eisenhower Theater and National Opera Company at the Kennedy Center, Theater J, Rep Stage, Everyman Theatre, Folger Shakespeare Theatre, University of Maryland Theatre Department, Maryland Opera Studio, and her personal favorite, maintaining Santa's wigs and beards for Macy's Santaland in NYC. Currently her passions are being an accessories stylist and team leader with Premier Designs Jewelry and crazy cat mom who will gladly share pet pictures even if you don't ask.



PAUL WEBSTER (Lighting Designer)

Paul is excited to be returning to The Colonial Players as a lighting designer! He studied Theater at Drew University and began work

as a lighting designer for the inaugural season of the Compass Rose Studio Theater in Annapolis, lighting

shows like *Lost In Yonkers*, *The Miracle Worker*, and *Oliver!*. After living in North Carolina for five years, Paul is thrilled to be back behind the light board!



JUDI WOBENSMITH (Producer)

Judi has been involved in many productions in the Annapolis/DC area both onstage and offstage since 1979. She has produced

shows at The Colonial Players, Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre, Children's Theatre of Annapolis, and Petrucci's, to name a few. Two of her CP productions were nominated for WATCH Awards. Previous directing credits include: *A Christmas Carol* (four times at CP), *The Music Man*, *Gigi*, *The King and I*, *Carnival*, *Marriages*, *Something's Afoot* (at Colonial Players and 2nd Star Productions), *The Sunshine Boys*, and *Mrs. California* among others. She has served three terms on the Board of Directors at CP and two terms as production director at Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre and Children's Theatre of Annapolis. Judi has also appeared in various TV commercials and documentaries as well as on MPT. She spends her spare time working at the House of Delegates in Annapolis. She thanks all the production staffs, past and present, for giving unstintingly to all the productions on which they have worked. But then, every volunteer at CP invests a lot of time and love. Judi would like to thank her husband, John, for supporting her in all of her theater forays.

ABOUT OUR NEXT PLAY

Lillian Garrett-Groag's *The White Rose* is set in Nazi Germany during the middle of World War II. Based on real events, it tells the story of five university students -- former members of the Hitler Youth -- who had become disillusioned by the atrocities committed by Hitler and the Nazis in their zealous campaign to conquer countries throughout Europe and Asia and to wipe out Jews and others considered to be "undesirables" by Der Fuhrer. The young people printed anti-Nazi leaflets that were distributed anonymously in Germany and Austria under the name of The White Rose from the summer of 1942 until they were arrested by the Gestapo in the winter of 1943. They were turned over for interrogation by a police inspector who didn't consider passing out leaflets to be a serious crime, but his superiors in the Gestapo demanded convictions and executions of the four boys and one girl. *The White Rose* is an intense drama that explores the complex moral and practical problems faced by the inspector as he searched for a way to save the girl's life without subjecting himself to the danger of defying the Gestapo. *The White Rose* will run for 14 performances, opening Oct. 25 and closing Nov. 16.



THE STAFF



LOIS BANSCHER
(Properties Designer)

Lois joined The Colonial Players 10 years ago because she enjoyed the staged performances and wanted to learn something new...just for the fun of it, and to see what these creative theater people were all about. Her first introduction was to JoAnn Gidos, who became Lois' "props guru," and little did she know that a journey was to begin. Since, Lois has propped on over 20 productions and received three WATCH nominations and an award for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* in 2016. Each production presents new challenges, and that's what makes it interesting. Thanks to everyone involved, and welcome to Sarah Irving, who has joined the *Arsenic and Old Lace* prop team journey. But most of all kudos to Director Dave Carter and his dream! Bully, Bully!



ERIC HUFFORD
(Set Designer)

Eric is trying something new with *Arsenic* - his first foray into set designing. He couldn't resist when he found out that the concept for the show required lots of woodworking! Eric's most recent theater credits at The Colonial Players include *Ghost of Christmas Present* in *A Christmas Carol* and director of the musical *Lucky Stiff*. You may have also seen him as Jerry Lukowski in *The Full Monty* at Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre. Favorite roles at CP include Jack Worthing in *Ernest in Love*, Leslie Bainbridge in *Taking Steps*, and Thomas Jefferson in *1776*. He has also played Jesus in *Jesus Christ Superstar* at AACC. From a special effects standpoint, Eric also did the effects for CP's *Sherlock's Last Case* and designed projections for CP's *33 Variations* and *Silent Sky*.



DAVID COOPER
(Sound Designer)

After a 20-year hiatus, David has been re-engaging in the theater community and is thrilled to be involved with another show at The Colonial Players. He has performed in, provided-behind-the-scenes support for, and been sound designer for a number of shows during the last two seasons. "Thanks and break a leg to the cast and crew of *Arsenic and Old Lace*!"



DREA LYNN
(Costume Designer)

Drea Lynn has been involved in performing arts in and around the Annapolis area for over 35 years as a performer, artist, entertainer, and instructor with numerous local, regional, and national companies. She is pleased to return to The Colonial Players as costume designer for this new twist on a classic show! Production credits for Colonial include lighting design for *Dog Logic*; producer for *The Unexpected Guest*, *the shape of things*, *Earth and Sky*, and *A Christmas Carol*; and, most recently, award-winning costume design for *1776*. She has appeared onstage in *Jekyll & Hyde*, *Assassins*, and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, and the Ruby Griffith award-winning production of *Enter the Guardsman*. When not working with theater, Drea can be found singing with her band Wheelhouse Rock Band throughout Maryland.



JEFF MOCHO
(Assistant Director)

Jeff Mocho is excited and kind of nervous being on this side of the casting table. It has been a long while since he last directed, and he would like to thank Dave Carter for the opportunity to be a part of this production. Most recently, he appeared at The Colonial Players as Master Page in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Other roles at CP include Tom Novacheck in *Venus in Fur* and one crazy weekend as Lt. Kaffee in *A Few Good Men*. "Much love to Shirley, Emma, Alice. Thank you for letting me share this life with you. Special thanks to Mom and Dad, who are here all the way from Albuquerque, NM just to see the show! No Pressure."



SHIRLEY PANEK
(Stage Manager/Understudy (Elaine))

Shirley has been spending more time backstage than onstage recently and is happy to stage manage such a talented and fun cast. Previous production credits include stage manager (*1776*, *Bat Boy*, *Venus in Fur*, *Nine*, *A New Brain*); producer (*33 Variations*, *Sex with Strangers*); and lighting designer (*Calendar Girls*, *Cripple of Inishmaan*, *Clue - The One Week Musical Project*, *A Few Good Men*, *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, *Trying*, *Moonlight*



THE CAST (continued)

last appeared here as a Marine in *A Few Good Men*. Steve's recent credits include Eugene in *Crazy For You* at Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre, Roscoe Dexter in *Singin' in the Rain* at 2nd Star Productions, and Ambrogio in *The Barber of Seville* at the Annapolis Opera. By day, Steve works at the Broadneck Branch of Anne Arundel County Public Library as an Early Literacy Specialist and storyteller. Steve thanks Dave and the cast and crew for this phenomenal experience and his family and friends for their love and support.



BROOKS SCHANDELMEIER
(Jonathan Brewster)

Brooks is excited to be in his first production at The Colonial Players after a 10-year hiatus from theater. He currently performs improv comedy with Free Range Improv and stand-up comedy in DC and Baltimore.



BOB "GUNSLINGER" SINGER

(The Rev. Dr. Harper/
Mr. Witherspoon)

Bob is a systems engineer working at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center. His career in the space business is eclipsed in length only by his hobby of performance art. Since starting in 1973, he has performed onstage, screen, TV, radio, and now the internet. Bob has been in more than 46 movies and television shows, from *Year One to Love Different*, and from *Evil Stepmothers* to *House of Cards*. Onstage, Bob has performed in more than 40 dramas, comedies, and musicals and was last seen in *Towards Zero* at The Colonial Players as Inspector Leach. This is Bob's second production with CP, so it's only appropriate he plays two characters. He hopes you enjoy the performance of the cast and crew in this classic comedy.



MARY SUIB
(Martha Brewster)

Mary is new to The Colonial Players and Annapolis and is delighted with both. Mary has been involved in a wide variety of theater activities and has loved participating in them all. Favorite stage roles include Violet in *August: Osage County* and Kate in *All My Sons*. Film has offered opportunities to be a flesh-eating vampire and a know-it-all church secretary. Darcy, the Whippet, is a loyal companion who is assisting in learning lines.



STEVE TOBIN
(Dr. Einstein)

Steve has mostly been sitting in the director's chair for the last 25 years, but is thrilled to be finally appearing in a production of *Arsenic and Old Lace* after all this time - especially with such a fun cast and crew. Steve's only other CP acting stint was as the yellow-eyed Jacob Marley in 2016's *A Christmas Carol*. As a director, Steve led CP's Ruby Griffith Award-winning *The Liar* in 2015 (with Dave and Sarah), *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* in 2017, and last season's 80's Shakespeare extravaganza, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Steve did his professional acting apprenticeship at The NJ Shakespeare Festival, and his favorite (very) past acting roles include Ken Harrison in *Whose Life is it Anyway?*, John Merrick in *The Elephant Man*, and Florizel in *The Winter's Tale*. In his spare time Steve enjoys being with his family, embarrassing his daughter with endless "Dad Jokes," and watching Sumo wrestling. "As always, gratitude and love to Jo, Diana, Mary Frances, Jeannie, and Dad."



JACK VENTON
(Officer Klein)

Jack is an Annapolis-based actor, appearing recently in AACC's productions of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Dragon Hunting Support Group*. He is excited to step back into community theater, and would like to extend warm thanks to his friends and family for their support.



SARAH WADE
(Elaine Harper)

Sarah is thrilled to be back onstage with *Arsenic and Old Lace*. Most recently, she had the honor of directing last season's *A Christmas Carol*. Prior CP credits include Honey in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (for which she won a WATCH award for Best Supporting Actress); Gabriella in *Boeing Boeing*; Cecily Cardew in *Ernest in Love*; twins Sabine and Isabelle in *The Liar*; multiple roles in *A Christmas Carol*; Catherine in *These Shining Lives*; the Star-to-be in *Annie*; Jessica in *Communicating Doors*; and Kitty in *Taking Steps*. She has also been behind the scenes as a sound designer for *Sex with Strangers*, *Calendar Girls*, *Watch on the Rhine*, and *Side Man*. "Thanks to everyone for understanding that I can't, I have rehearsal. Love always to Eric."

THE COLONIAL PLAYERS, INC.
presents



ARSENIC AND OLD LACE

Written by
JOSEPH KESSELRING

Directed by
DAVE CARTER

THE CAST

(in order of appearance)

Abby Brewster.....Bernadette Arvidson
The Rev. Dr. Harper.....Bob "Gunslinger" Singer
Teddy Brewster.....John Halmi
Officer Brophy.....Bill Deck
Officer Klein.....Jack Venton
Martha Brewster.....Mary Suib
Elaine Harper.....Sarah Wade
Mortimer Brewster.....Dann Alagna
Mr. Gibbs.....Larry Levinson
Jonathan Brewster.....Brooks Schandelman
Dr. Einstein.....Steve Tobin
Officer O'Hara.....Steve Mangum
Lieutenant Rooney.....Larry Levinson
Mr. Witherspoon.....Bob "Gunslinger" Singer

On September 14, the role of Elaine Harper will be played by Shirley Panek

PLACE

The action in both acts takes place in the living room
of the Brewster home in Brooklyn.

TIME

ACT I

Afternoon and evening, September, 1944

ACT II

Nighttime of the same day and the next morning.

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

Produced by Special Arrangement with Dramatists Play Service.

Taking photographs and using any recording devices are strictly prohibited.
Smoking is prohibited throughout the building.