



Footlights

JUNE-JULY 2024

The Players of Utica Newsletter

Funny Girl: A Classic Musical to Lift Your Spirits

OUR AUDIENCES ALWAYS look forward to our musical-comedy presentations—and for good reason: they are enormous fun! And when it's a classic like *Funny Girl*, it's a certainty that there will be a lot of smiling faces in the theatre. Musicals always attract the the finest performers in the area, and when a great cast of singers and actors are guided by the sparkling direction of **Daniel Fusillo** and music director **Karen Corigliano**, we know we're going to have a big hit on our hands. *Footlights* spoke with director Dan Fusillo about the musical.

FOOTLIGHTS: You've chosen another Broadway classic to conclude Players' 2023-2024 Season. For the few who might not be familiar with the musical, tell us what *Funny Girl* is about.

DAN: *Funny Girl* is one of Broadway's most classic musicals and biggest hits. It is based on the life and career of the comedic Ziegfeld Follies star Fanny Brice. Told in flashback, it features her rise to fame amidst her stormy relationship and marriage to gambler Nick Arnstein.

FOOTLIGHTS: It looks like you have a fantastic cast for the show.

DAN: Every director hopes for a stellar cast. How very fortunate I am to present such an amazingly talented group of actors and singers to our audiences. Rehearsals have been a pleasure due to their dedication, enthusiasm, professionalism, and outstanding talent. *Funny Girl* has a mix of veteran performers along with newcomers to Players.

FOOTLIGHTS: Doesn't *Funny Girl* also have some of the most well-known Broadway songs?

DAN: With music by Jules Styne and lyrics by Bob Merrill, *Funny Girl* has a breezy and tuneful score that features powerful standards, such as

"I'm the Greatest Star," "Don't Rain On My Parade," and the show's biggest hit, "People." The five musicians in the band bring to the score all the jazziness and richness it deserves.

FOOTLIGHTS: Staging a musical is always a challenge, so what has been most gratifying for you in putting together this production?



DAN: One challenge with this show was how to stage a big-scale musical like *Funny Girl* within the setting Players offers. I achieved this by using the stage as well as a playing area that connects more intimately with the audience, as I did with *Gypsy* and *Always, Patsy Cline*. Richard K. Stoodley's creative setting works so perfectly with this concept. I am grateful for all the technical support offered to this production in so many ways. I am excited to bring *Funny Girl* to our audiences, which will certainly entertain and lift your spirits!

Funny Girl, which concludes our regular 2023-2024 season, features **Jessica Kaczor, John Murphy, Anthony Graham, Walter Moore, Lonnie Etter, Eric Almleaf, Jessica Wilk, Linda Potts, Sharon Rankins-Burd, Chuck Bastien, Walter Moore, Steve Handzel, Hannah Ali, Maddie Adkins, Dean Abraham, Claire Haile, John Krause, Tayler Kochan, Cassie Dolan, Peter Carlesimo, and Rocco LaDuca.**

Funny Girl has a running time of about two hours, with a 15-minute intermission. The seven performances of the play are as follows:

- Thursday, June 13 at 7:30 p.m.
- Fridays, June 7 and 14 at 7:30 p.m.
- Saturdays, June 8 and 15 at 2:00 p.m.
- Sundays, June 9 and 16 at 2:00 p.m.

For all tickets, go to our website at <http://www.playersofutica.org/order-tickets> or call 315-724-7624. ☆

Music by Jule Styne,
Lyrics by Bob Merrill
Book by Isobel Lennart
from an original story
by Miss Lennart

Directed by
Daniel Fusillo
Music Direction by
Karen Corigliano

JUNE 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 2024

2024-2025 SEASON



KOSHER LUTHERANS

By William Missouri Downs • Directed by Art Felshaw
 A curveball comedy about an infertile Jewish couple and their desperate attempts to have a baby. Their dreams come true when they meet a naïve, pregnant Lutheran girl from Iowa who is willing to let them adopt her baby. The couple decides to pose as Lutherans, leading to hysterical twists and turns.

September 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 2024



BAD SEED

By Maxwell Anderson • Directed by Suzanne Rodio
 In a small Southern town, the Penmarks live with their daughter, Rhoda. On the surface, Rhoda is sweet and charming, loved by all. But when one of Rhoda's schoolmates is mysteriously drowned at a picnic, suspicions arise about Rhoda. Is she the little angel she appears to be?

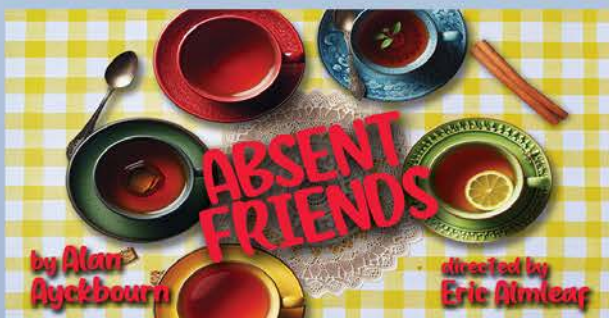
October 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 27, 2024



THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER

By Barbara Robinson • Directed by Kelly DeGrace
 In this hilarious Christmas classic, a couple struggling to put on a church Christmas pageant is faced with casting the Herdman kids – probably the most inventively awful kids in history. You won't believe the mayhem – and the fun – when the Herdmans collide head-on with the story of Christmas!

December 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 2024



ABSENT FRIENDS

By Alan Ayckbourn • Directed by Eric Almleaf
 In this dramatic comedy, Colin needs comfort after his fiancée's death, so his friends arrange a tea party. But with their mixed-up lives, perhaps they're not the best ones to offer comfort. When Colin arrives, their tenseness contrasts dramatically with his air of cheer, being the only happy one among them.

April 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 2025



ROMANTIC FOOLS

By Rich Orloff • Directed by Deborah Martin
 12 comedies examining love, lust, dating, and romance – from a date with a caveman to the joys of dull sex to the surprise frustrations of having a perfect mate. With influences of Monty Python, Saturday Night Live, and the Marx Brothers, these sketches celebrate the inherent comedy in relationships.

June 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 2025

Kinderkrankenhaus Special Summer Show

FOLLOWING OUR SUMMER tradition of presenting original plays by local playwrights, Players is very pleased to produce *Kinderkrankenhaus* written by Jesi Bender, who will also direct the drama.

In a vaguely familiar time and place, children gathered inside the gray walls of a hospital are given diagnoses they don't understand and told to work toward correcting their ills... or face the consequences. "*Kinderkrankenhaus* explores neurodiversity, the pathologizing of difference, and the complexity of labels in a world where the unspeaking are seen as unthinking," says Bender.

The play was a semifinalist for a Dramatists Guild Foundation Fellowship, a finalist for Broadway World's Best New Play 2023, and a finalist for Big Other's 2021 Reader's Choice Award. "In many regards, *Kinderkrankenhaus* has the makings of a contemporary classic," wrote one review. And another said, "With this bold new piece of hybrid playwriting, Jesi Bender deftly choreographs the traumas of abandonment (familial and societal) alongside the treasures of youth."

Show dates for *Kinderkrankenhaus* are Friday, July 19 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, July 21 at 2 p.m. All tickets are \$15 and will go on sale June 17. ☆



Paul Cruskie

PLAYERS MOURNS THE passing in May of one of its actors and directors, **Paul Cruskie**. Paul, a recently retired associate professor of humanities at MVCC, was active with Players of Utica from the mid-1990s to early 2000s. As an actor, he performed in *Gypsy* (1994), *The Boys Next Door* (1994), and *Broadway Bound* (1996).

Paul directed *Company* (1995), *Speed the Plow* (1997), *The House of Blue Leaves* (1997), *The Elephant Man* (1998), *Three Tall Women* (2000), and *An Inspector Calls* (2001).

Players extends its sympathies to all of Paul's friends, colleagues, and family, especially to wife **Dale Mosher Cruskie**, who choreographed some Players productions. ☆



Gift Certificates

AS LONG AS you are purchasing your subscription to the 2024-2025 season (see page 4), why not also get a subscription gift certificate for a friend or family member? After all, what could be a better gift than a season of theatre?

Another option is that you can purchase a gift certificate for a single show (see the lineup on page 2) or two, three, or four shows—it's up to you.

For more information about season and individual show gift certificates, go to our "About Tickets & Membership Subscriptions" web page (<https://www.playersofutica.org/tickets-and-memberships>). ☆



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2023–2024 Season

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Players Receives DAR Award

ON THURSDAY, MAY 2, The Oneida County chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) held their annual Community Awards Dinner at Harts Hill Inn.

Players was honored with the organization's award in their Excellence in Entertainment category, and President **Art Felshaw** accepted the award on behalf of the theatre.

Art delivered a thank-you speech, which included a brief summary of our 117-year history and current goals and initiatives.

Also attending as representatives of Players were board members **Kelly DeGrace** and **Pamela Goodison**. ☆

2024-2025 SEASON



GET SHOW DETAILS AT PLAYERSOFUTICA.ORG

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