

The Prompter



ALTON LITTLE THEATER

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2011-2012 SEASON

A Beautiful Fall Harvests a Compelling Drama at ALT!

Alton Little Theater will produce the compelling drama, *CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD* by Mark Medoff, November 11th through 20th. The play, which won the 1980 Tony Award for "Best Play" had historical significance because it was the first Broadway production featuring a Deaf actress in a leading role. Today it is relevant, because while Deaf actors and actresses have gone on to more and more film and stage work, the nature of human beings is that we all struggle with embracing dissimilarities in each other. *CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD* is a mesmerizing love story about a speech teacher who falls for a beautiful but willful girl in a small New England School for the Deaf and the obstacles they face due to their different perspectives. The story pivots on moments of humor and tension, passion and discovery. "The trick of telling a love story is deceptively simple," say the playwright, "You find a core of romantic energy so strong that nothing - not the events of the story or the circumstances of the characters intrudes". Medoff's commitment to the work, which included writing the screenplay for the award-winning film starring Marlee Matlin and William Hurt, focuses on the communication breakdowns that all relationships face. The use of sign language in the production reminds the audience of the eloquence of gesture and glance and that the language of real love goes beyond mere words.

Director Kevin Frakes has recruited a talented ensemble cast of seven. Aidan Combs of Alton and Kathryn Senseman of St. Louis take on the central roles of James and Sarah. They are supported by actors taking on the roles of family, adversaries, advocates and colleagues; Steven Harders, Pat Kulish, Julia Frazier, Casey Turner and Jeff Heil comprise the ensemble. Some cast members drive a great distance and sought out roles in a play that represents "the best of drama for actors". All of the cast is highly invested in the successful portrayal of these iconic characters and "handling the complex emotions of Medoff's script", says Director Frakes.

Reservations for the production are available through the Alton Little Theater Box Office voicemail at 618-462-6562 and are NOW available for on line purchase through the ALT website: altonlittletheater.org. All nine performances will be interpreted into American Sign Language by students from Southwestern Illinois College who are seeking certification. The cast has worked with signing instructors headed up by Becki Combs at least four hours every week since October 1st, in addition to five nights of rehearsal. The cast's commitment and love of the production will surely enrich the lives of audience members who attend this lovely fall production at the Showplace. Groups of 20 or more receive additional savings off the cost of a door sale and, of course, Season Tickets for the "Great 78th Season" are the best savings best by far!

Alton Little Theater Goes a Little More High Tech!

Alton Little Theater now offers on line ticket purchase options for all performances of all productions scheduled November 2011 through May 2012. This purchase option is available through the easy links on the theater's website: www.altonlittletheater.org "This innovation was absolutely necessary", says PR director Lee Cox, "for the increasing number of individuals in each successive generation who make most of their purchases via the internet, the on line option was a must-have". Cox also shares that the theater has collected data for over a year—requests from people who want to buy advance tickets for a very popular show or who have difficulty dealing with voicemail reservations by telephone - "for these reasons and more, ALT needed to add this important purchase option". The on line capability will be expanded in the Spring to include purchase of Season Tickets; however, Cox emphasizes that ALT will not lose the "personal touch" that so many Season Ticket holders have expressed appreciation for and buyers will still have the option of purchase "in person" or making a reservation through the Box office number 618-462-6562. Reservations are now being accepted (by phone as well as on line) for CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD. Box office Chairman Cliff Davenport will coordinate on line ticket purchases with ALT Office manager Laura Shansey, so that in the next few months the program through "Ticket Leap" can be further expanded. The theater is already offering some new discounts for groups of 20 or more, with additional savings for groups booking on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday evenings. Alton Little Theater has just completed the official Season Ticket Campaign for The Great 78Th Season but Gift Certificates can be obtained by calling the office at 618-462-3205 and will shortly be available on line as well. Cox encourages everyone to check out the ALT website. She believes "it is very easy to navigate and offers information about the production, auditions, and community partnerships - and now we're keeping up with the possibilities of new technologies". The theater's normal seating capacity is 225, with nine performances of each production. Cox encourages everyone to "peruse the ALT website each month for more information about upcoming productions and the ease of purchasing tickets at very affordable prices"!



Autumn has arrived. The temperatures are cooling down, but things are heating up at ALT. Our first production, "The Spitfire Grill", gave us a wonderful start to our season. Kudos to the director, cast and crew for a great production! In just a few short weeks "Children of a Lesser God" will open (Nov. 11-20), and then the holidays are upon us.

We have also been busy off-stage. Since we became owners of the building to the east (across Henry St.), we have been busy repairing it and moving all of our smaller hand props and set pieces into it. We had a couple of work days where members worked for several hours boxing, moving, un-boxing, sorting, and storing all the various items. Thanks to our tireless volunteers, our new "house" is in pretty good shape.

Another project going on this month is Vintage Voices. If you have never attended this popular event, take advantage of the crisp fall weather and come to the Alton City Cemetery where every Saturday afternoon in October stories of Alton history are told by the people who lived it. Actors portray people from Alton's past and tell their part in the story of Alton.

These are just a few of the things going on at ALT. There is much more to come in the months ahead. If you would like to join the ATL community or simply volunteer, our membership meetings are held on the 3rd Monday of every month (except December) at 7:30 p.m. at the theater. We look forward to meeting you!

Gail Drillinger
President, ALT
October 2011



Patron Donations Make a Big Difference!

Each season, a group of people go "above and beyond" and add a donation of \$25 to \$1000 to their Season Ticket Purchase. Alton Little Theater long ago designated these generous people the "angels" of the theater and, indeed, they have not only sustained ALT's existence but have helped the theater to grow and meet the challenges of a challenging economy. This past year, patron money was allocated to repair and upgrade the Sound System in the auditorium, repair three air conditioning units in the foyer, auditorium and annex and to purchase a portable Sound System for community presentations. Thankfully, from the donations of about 100 people and a bequest from a long time ALT member, the "Angel Fund" could cover these unbudgeted costs. The theater has an annual budget of \$156,000 in operating costs and over 90% of money collected goes right back into the businesses in the community. Building upkeep and improvements are a "tricky thing to predict" say Lee Cox. The Board of Governors takes the fiscal responsibility for the organization very seriously and hopes to produce high quality productions in a comfortable space at affordable prices. "This can be a challenge at times", says Cox, "as royalties for musicals and plays have increased dramatically over the last couple of years and utilities have skyrocketed".

This season is greatly impacted by some residual problems from last winter. Cox explains that the roof on the ALT small outside bin collapsed and the resulting water damage ruined most of the theater's collection of rugs and some set pieces. In addition, the ice removal from the parking lot during the January and February plays has now left big cracks in the asphalt. A new fundraising campaign is being planned for spring called "Help Build a Beautiful Set" - with a goal of \$5,000 to replace stock props, rugs, lighting sources and set pieces.

The Board of Governors is already planning a spring party to honor the patrons who gave gifts for the "Great 78Th Season" and hopefully donors will continue their pledge and help the theater refurbish the lost items. Some individuals may wish to take advantage of tax benefits by making a donation before December 31st, 2011 and some companies offer matching donations by year's end as well. All donations or inquiries can be obtained through the ALT office, 618-462-3205, PO BOX 156, Alton, Illinois 62002. Invitations for the spring Patron Party will go out by the end of February.



2450 North Henry St. • P.O. Box 156 • Alton, IL 62002

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ALTON LITTLE THEATER
2450 North Henry Street
P.O. Box 156 • Alton, IL 62002
www.altonlittletheater.org
e-mail: altonlittletheater@ymail.com

Curtain Time: 7:30 p.m.
Sunday Matinee: 2:00 p.m.
Box Office:
(618) 462-6562

Alton Little Theater
"Entertaining a Tradition"

VISION:
Alton Little Theater, dedicated to discovering, showcasing and nurturing talent of all ages and proud of its outstanding reputation, remains committed to excellence and creativity in the theater arts.

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