

The MONTEBELLO Voice

an independent gazette

pollinate!

June 30, 2021



New club seeks input

The new Zoom Concert Club does not replace the Music Club’s concert series, which the coronavirus shut down and will soon be back in business. Instead it will take advantage of the incredible availability of classical music on Google. Audiences will select what we listen to. Attendance can be in person or by Zoom, as can discussion of the music.

This proposal was approved by the Activities Committee and by the Board of Directors. The publicity has been prepared and is awaiting distribution by Montebello management. Hopefully this will happen soon. In the meantime please be thinking of what music you’d like to hear. And send any questions or suggestions to me at meagain37@cox.net. – Richard Titus 📧

Vaccines are great, but are not 100%

The vaccines we have received are advertised at between 85% and 95% effective, and for some taking medications that hamper their immune systems, considerably lower. A bit unnerving is that the effectiveness of the Pfizer vaccine has reportedly dropped from 95% to 88% against the rapidly spreading Delta variant. Let’s continue our vigilance for the rest of the year.

The hooker in the CDC’s unmasking is that those not vaccinated are on the honor system to continue wearing a mask. Ha! It’s pretty clear that the ones not vaccinated are the ones most likely not to wear a mask.

I have compromised a bit by going from a double KN95 mask to a single mask, but I will not ride on the elevator with anyone not wearing a mask. This seems a prudent precaution given what we know about the vaccines and the variants. – John Powers 📧

Sing, sing, sing

“Where words fail, music speaks.”

Hans Christian Anderson

With the pandemic almost behind us, with shots in arms, with Montebello slowly returning to normal, your Music Club is planning for the future. We want music to “speak” to us again.

Some ideas we have been considering are sing-a-longs in the various lobbies as we practice and entertain; near-term holiday concerts such as Veterans’ Day and Christmas; and plans to again make White House Christmas Ornaments available. Now that is long-range planning!

Needless to say, we are always looking for new members to sing and have

fun with us – all vocal ranges, men and women, and folks who want to get back into the activities that make Montebello such a great place to live. Won’t all you “shower singers” join us (preferably with clothing on!)? We promise you’ll love the experience.

With a projected March 2022 opening for the new Community Center, wouldn’t it be great for our first concert in the new facility to be our Saint Patrick’s Day celebration? There’s no better way to test the acoustics and bring the community together in songs and laughter.

We practice every other Monday night. Contact Jane at jane-mariewhite@hotmail.com or Carol at carolcoyle@cox.net. 📧

Cover photo by Patricia Jacobec via Facebook

Make ‘em laugh

Got a good joke? A funny story? As they say, humor is the best medicine, says our community’s beloved Erwin Jacobs, M.D. In an effort to bring more joy into our lives, he is seeking contributions to a Montebello humor book he is putting together. Please email him at wfubg47@gmail.com if you have something funny to say. 📧

The Montebello Voice wants to hear from you: musings, travels, announcements, photos, book reviews, commentary, memoirs, essays, analysis, poems, suggestions, club news, recipes, and free ads. A twice-monthly publication for the residents, by the residents

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in memoriam

Tracy Ledbetter

December 10, 1972 – June 16, 2021



Tracy enjoyed parks and music. He enjoyed being around the people who mattered to him.

Services will be held on Tuesday, July 6 at the Harvest Assembly Baptist Church

8008 Fordson Road

Alexandria, VA 22306

Viewing 9-10:30 a.m.

Service at 10:30 a.m.

Send cards to:

Tracy Ledbetter

c/o Sharon Waters

33 South French Street

Alexandria VA 22304

I worked with my Tracy Ledbetter for 23 years. He started his position at the front desk one year after me. Tracy was always friendly and helpful from Day One. Though we typically worked opposite shifts, we always kept in touch. We would share stories, laugh at common situations, and often commiserate together. Tracy enjoyed good cuisine, especially seafood. I used to gently fuss at him for leaving shrimp shells and crab legs in the garbage overnight that would be an unpleasant aroma when I came in the next day! Now, I'd willingly endure that if it meant having my friend back. Tracy was loyal to Montebello. He stayed in the Days Inn several times during winter storms in order to be available to keep the front desk operational. He worked diligently even when he was not well. Tracy worked as a security guard at one point. Being let go from Montebello was very hurtful to him. I will miss my coworker and friend!

– Aja White 🍷



Gnomes!

By Raymond Houck

Garden gnomes, known in German as *Gartenzwerg*, are popular lawn ornament figurines of small humanoid creatures that depict male dwarfs, typically bearded and wearing red pointy hats. The figures can be terra cotta, resin, or plastic and are sometimes posed dozing, fishing, and gardening. These little guys traditionally stand between one and two feet tall, but

a recent trend has introduced diminutive gnomes of only a few inches in height. Originating as a decoration for the well-to-do in Europe, garden gnomes have appeared in gardens and lawns throughout the western world, among all social classes, and are often looked upon as kitsch.

Phillip Griebel first produced garden gnome figurines like those we see today during the mid-19th century. Griebel was a sculptor of terracotta animals in Thuringia, Germany, in the small town of Grafenroda and renowned for his company's ceramic manufacture. Legends about gnomes were popular in the area, and Griebel made the gnome statues for people to enjoy the myths and stories better. For generations, the Phillip Griebel family-run factory continued to make garden gnomes in Germany. Today the garden gnome population in Germany has grown to perhaps 30 million!

Garden Gnomes spread from Sax-

ony and Thuringia to other European countries and became especially popular in Britain and France. In 1947, Sir Charles Isham purchased 21 terra cotta gnomes from the Baehr and Maresch company in Dresden and took them to his estate in England, where he placed them in his gardens. Only one of these survives today at Isham's Lamport Hall, a gnome named "Lampy" who is over 100 years old and is insured for over \$1.5 million.

The design was later influenced by the appearance of the dwarves in the

In 2014 the Social Democratic Party of Austria used gnome figurines called "Coolmen" during their election campaign. These gnomes, wearing sunglasses and holding signs bearing slogans, appeared along highly trafficked roadways. After the election, 400 gnomes disappeared, causing the party to file a police report which attracted international notice.

Aside from being cute and colorful garden ornaments, gnomes have also appeared in movies. One of those films is "Amelie," the 2001 French movie in which the story revolves around a garden gnome. Another film is the 2011 British-American CGI movie "Gnomeo and Juliet," which features garden gnomes as the characters. This movie even had a sequel in 2018 called "Sherlock Gnomes."

Garden gnomes have starred in television episodes and video games like "Fable III" where the player's character aims to collect gnomes from throughout the world. Gnomes also show up as lovable animated little characters in Harry Potter novels and films. Today, gnomes continue to being featured in a wide variety of literature and other media.

The next time you see a garden gnome, you'll be able to tell many things about them, from who created them to how they were made and even some legends about these amusing little characters. 🧝



1937 Disney animated movie *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, a film that caused a resurgence of interest in garden gnomes. Another swell of popularity occurred in the 1970s with the production of plastic gnomes.

In the 1990s, a trend was for people to abduct garden gnomes from people's yards, travel with them to various locales, and send photographs of their adventures together to the gnomes' owners. As a parody of this practice, Travelocity.com commercials featuring the "Roaming Gnome" now poke fun at organizations such as the Gnome Liberation Front that have "liberated" hundreds of gnomes from people's gardens.

A peek behind the curtain

By Bob Shea

Having recently called community theater an “overlooked local treasure,” I would like to pull the curtain back and share some little-known facts that occur before opening night and away from the eyes of the audience.

A disclaimer: This is based on my experience in four different theater companies. Other theaters might have variations on what I describe.

I have been asked a number of times why community theater tickets are not less expensive, since “no one gets paid, right?” Actually, at \$18-\$20 per ticket (with season tickets even less expensive), they are a bargain. Costs for a given show is one of the big misconceptions revealed when one looks behind the curtain.

Income versus expenses

Community theater companies operate as IRS 501(3)c entities requiring periodic submission of appropriate documentation to verify non-profit status. Usually they have no paid staff. Most income is from ticket sales with a few grants or donations adding to the income stream. The best bargain is a season ticket, which allows a patron to purchase tickets in advance for a complete season at a reduced performance rate. This is “money in the bank” for show budgets and annual overhead expenses. Theater companies could not exist without this upfront income, but the real money makers are walk-in patrons who purchase a full-price ticket for a single performance. They also fill the empty seats that are not sold before the season starts.

The expenses for the most part are known to all: construction material, paint, costumes (made or rented), printing, utilities, paid musicians (some are not as dedicated as the actors), and venue rental for a gypsy company or mortgage if the theater is owned but has an outstanding loan.

The biggest single expense is one that most theater-goers do not know about.



Every play or musical is copy-righted with the rights owned by someone, usually a brokerage house in New York City that manages royalties. This is charged based on the size of the theater, the number of performances, and other theater-unique factors. For a play, there is a standard per “performance fee” that must be paid upfront to obtain the rights to present the play and to obtain the scripts. For a musical, the musical score (words and music) rental must also be paid in advance. These costs are the single biggest expense associated with any show, and one that many people do not know about.

When I was associated with the Williamsburg Players in the Tidewater area, we opened a new theater in November 2011 with Mel Brooks’s outrageous and highly acclaimed *The Producers*. The rights for a 300-seat theater with 16 performances was \$80 per show. The

rights to the music score was \$9,000 for the run of the show – over \$10,000 just for the rights to put on the show. That requires many butts in seats to just break even at \$20 per ticket in addition to covering all the other associated costs of a show, an expense most theater-goers do not recognize as a basic cost to do business. Musicals are popular, but outrageously expensive. Did you know that?

Additionally, rights will not be granted if a traveling professional company is scheduled to do a show in the local area (50 mile radius) in the near future (usually 12 months). Competing shows are not good for ticket sales, and the professionals prevail.

Only once during my theater adventures have I been associated with a non-copy-righted play. Oscar Wilde’s *The Im-*

portance of *Being Earnest*, first staged in London in February 1894, was in the public domain with only the cost of scripts being charged. A most unusual set of circumstances.

Season selection

A dedicated group of volunteers will spend months reading and debating dozens of scripts to select the five shows for the coming September to June season. They must consider whether the company has the talent and physical capability to actually do the show, how popular will the show be, has it been done recently locally, has a proven local director asked that the show be considered, and how does it fit with the mix usually offered each season – drama, mystery, comedy, musical. Musicals are always popular, but is there enough song and dance talent available? What are the royalties (see above)? How does

dramatic arts

the show fit with the demographics of the theater's audience? Thankless but crucial drudgery behind the scenes.

The wrong selection can be a financial disaster. Example: The show *Marvin's Room* was a film success starring, among others, Meryl Streep. The plot evolved around a family's dysfunction as Marvin, a grandfather, lay moaning and dying on stage. It was the wrong selection for a predictable audience of senior citizens who wanted to be entertained and not be reminded of their frailties. Great theater, wrong show for that audience!

The script versus local preferences

In the film *A Few Good Men*, a USMC colonel played by Jack Nicholson uses language that could be shocking on a local stage. A well-meaning local director changed some of the colonel's court martial language, assuming it was too profane for local audiences. The theater company was told by the copy-right broker to use the script as written or the rights to the show would be revoked. Local directors do not have the privilege to modify the copy-righted script regardless of its impact on local standards and sensitivities. Very few shows even have two scripts, one for the high school drama departments and the other for everyone else, but community theater is not high school. The "big boy's" script must be used. Do it as written or find something else.

Who is in charge?

The director of a show has a vision. He/she holds auditions, selects the cast, guides the cast and crew through endless rehearsals, and receives the credit for a success or blame for a failure. However, when the curtain opens for the first show with a real audience, the director is usually not in the theater. His or her work is finished. Instead, the stage manager owns the show. The stage manager is responsible for scene changes, cues, lights, props, sound, make-up,

costumes, etc. A good stage manager, picked by the director, is the key to success. They really deserve the audience's applause at the end of the night but do not get it. They are usually recognized on a show day by a pained or harried facial expression and a headset. Thank goodness for stage managers.

What is a producer?

On Broadway, the producer is the CEO of a complex company raising investment funds, hiring key people such as the director and name stars, and answering to the investors. In community theater, the producer is a coordinator, a bridge to the board of directors, managing show funds (all directors want unlimited funding and hate budgets), making sure all the myriad of right things happen as the director molds the cast and stage crew, set construction, box office, publicity, playbill printing, house management, and anything else not part of the director's mandate. Conflict management behind the curtain.

The utility of outfielder

Just as in sports where multi-talented athletes, but not super stars, exist on every team, community theater has its utility actors/actresses. When auditions are completed, when starring roles have been designated, rare is the director who has cast every role, especially with a large cast. Gender, talent, age, or availability may leave one or two lesser roles vacant. Every theater has its pool of utility actors who are then called and persuaded to fill the voids. They might even play two or three lesser cast members, but their dedication is priceless. They are stars in their own right. Talented people without stage egos.

The world of community theater is unique – unpaid volunteers with day jobs, families, and just 24 hours in each day. They thrive on the excitement and applause when on the stage, but there is a complete ecosystem for them, which is only seen when people are allowed to peek "behind the curtain." 📖



*Resident education expert Kris Amundson discusses her new book, **81 Questions for Parents: Helping Your Kids Succeed in School**, as part of **Speaker Series**.*

Photo by Dian McDonald

A day at Pebble Beach

By Chester Taylor

I awoke to the alarm

on my iPhone going off. It was still dark outside, 5:30 a.m. I turned on a light and used a remote to start the gas fireplace. It was chilly. The day prior, I had arrived at Monterey, California to play in the Mizuno Pro-Am. I checked in at the lodge at the Pebble Beach Resort and then went over to the practice facility where I met Chris Voshall, Senior Club Engineer, Mizuno, at the Mizuno Tour Van. Chris had set up a camera. My clubs were Mizuno Tour Pro forged irons with graphite shafts. Chris wanted me to hit Mizuno's new driver. When I had taken several strokes, I went to the Mizuno fitting room where I was given shirts, jackets, caps, and a sweater to wear for the tournament. The last thing before I went to bed that night was read the weather report printed out for me and placed on my pillow with a mint.

After a quick shower, I dressed in the new clothes. I grabbed a breakfast burrito and some coffee at the sports café and jumped onto the shuttle bus going to the practice range, where I met Laird Small, Director of Pebble Beach Golf Academy. Laird was helping Vaughn Taylor get ready for his next tournament at the Rivera Country Club. We spoke briefly and then I went outside to hit a few golf balls.

When I was warmed up, I grabbed my golf bag and hopped on the bus to the golf course, where Patrick McGovern, my assigned caddie, was waiting for me. I looked over at the clubhouse's patio. People were sitting there wearing sunglasses and sweaters, talking and laughing, eating artichoke omelets or huevos rancheros and drinking mimosas.

Behind me was beautiful Monterey Bay, with waves crashing on rocks. Suddenly, the marshal waved me over to tee box 1. It was time.

I was pulling out my driver as I heard the announcer say, "Ladies and gentlemen, let's welcome Chester Taylor, amateur, from Alexandria, Virginia." I took a practice swing, then stepped up to the ball. The paddles that said SILENCE went up. I tried to control my breathing. All eyes were on me, the president of Mizuno and his staff, all the world's best golf professionals and amateurs, officials, and guests. I took a couple of deep breathes, concentrated, and hit one of my better shots. The ball flew straight and high in the air. It rolled a little to the left, landed just short of a bunker exactly as I had planned, perfect position for my next shot. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief, especially me. 🏌️



Coarse is the new fine

(a little light satire)

By Bonnie Jacob

Liza is thinking about her eyebrows.

“They’ve grown wild for the past sixteen months. But I have to ask myself: Is it time to tame them?”

Still quarantining with her parents in Pittsburgh, the New York-based singer-actor-waiter (who declined to give her last name to protect her brand) understands that when she starts going out on auditions again, it would be helpful to look more like her headshots. But she’s hesitating.

“To be honest, I’ve kind of gotten used to the unibrow look. I feel like I could go for more thoughtful roles, or maybe historical drama,” she explains. “People didn’t always have tweezers.

“But I might start shaving my legs.”

Liza is not alone. Across the USA, people are emerging from isolation with more

casual attitudes about their personal styles. Whether, like Liza, they lacked access to spa services, or like many others, they simply lacked a reason to get dressed, they’re now asking the tough questions: Do I really need to smarten up? What if I’m happy the way I am?

“People adapt, based on necessity,” says Taurus, a sociology postdoc at a Texas university. (He uses a pseudonym because he fears his faculty advisor will steal his ideas.)

“During the pandemic, many people found it necessary to become, shall we say, less couth. Now, they’re having a hard time letting go,” he

ting to turn on the dishwasher and “people got tired of unloading dirty plates. So we adapted,” says Taurus. “Now, we eat out of cans. I don’t see that changing anytime soon.”

One roommate, a music performance major, missed the stimulation of a live audience, so he started to write a symphony based on the first four notes of MMMBop, which has been running though his head since 1997. He keeps at it because he thinks he can patent it as an earworm remover. Another roommate, a mathematician, got bored with the same old numbers. “Now she goes barefoot so she can count on her toes.”

Of course, some of us liked the old ways, or at least our old wardrobes, and are happy to get dressed up again. But not everyone finds it easy to get back to normal.

Take Eddie from Cincinnati, who won’t divulge his last name because his wife would divorce him.

“She says I’m going to split my pants because I gained a few pounds – didn’t everybody?” says Eddie. “I told her that’s body shaming.

“It’s my muffin top, and I’ll keep it if I want to – pants or no pants.”

Stages of Quarantine



explains.

“Think of it like the Stockholm Syndrome, only for fashion.”

But our hold on recent habits applies to other areas as well, Taurus agrees.

As a case in point, he recalls that he and his roommates kept forget-

wags 'n whiskers



wags 'n whiskers



bloomers



sounds of music



Resident DJ Scott Compton kicked off Montebello's return to socializing with his popular Queens of Jazz music on Picnic Hill.



*Photo by Miriam
Rosenthal*

The Visitor

By Sarah Newcomb

A strange hum
settles over the trees
as if from a space ship's
engines, waiting
for the return
of explorers
from its crew

One stares up at me
with other-worldly eyes—
clinging to my pant leg
with his plethora
of spiked and jointed legs

His wings, gauzy as an angel's,
joined to the body
of a monster
His gaze, a million years old,
Taking in the
reluctant human intruder
Imposing
on his long awaited
love song