

THE SPACE BETWEEN THE SPOKES

Anne Knoll

For centuries, great thinkers have pondered the value of the space between the spokes of a wheel. We clearly see the circumference of the wheel, its center point and the spokes. We acknowledge how those pieces contribute to the successful “doing” of what a wheel does. Yet, what of the seemingly empty space between those spokes? What lies there, unnoticed?

I suppose if we were to make an analogy here, we might consider the wheel circumference to be The Ritz Theatre. Its center point might be the overall artistic leadership, and the spokes might account for directors, actors, designers, technicians and musicians. At a glance, what is it we don't see? What's not out there in full view? Completing the analogy, the space between the spokes might be the “unseen” force of air and energy that allows the well constructed wheel to move. In a theatre, it might be—the staff!

So, this article becomes my tribute to the unsung heroes, those who seldom share the limelight—yet, without whose force, the wheel couldn't function. Here's a glimpse at who the staff members are and some of the tasks they accomplish each day.

Brian Bathurst, Managing Director: Manages company financials, oversees the day-to-day operation of the organization, supervises non-production staff, reviews contracts, works with vendors, coordinates mailings, provides grant information and purchases theatre supplies.

Susan Dewey, Director of Group Services and Advertising: Phone sales, solicits and manages group sales and “buy-outs,” sells advertising for the program, represents The Ritz at the NJEA convention, creates marketing material for group sales, books performances for Ritz Reveille and children's shows to outside venues, heads The Ritz recycling efforts.

Erienne Poole, Guest Services: Answers phones, works the Box Office, formats the Playbill for the designer, organizes data for headshots and resumes, assists with auditions, stage manages, performs, does props, and functions as our wonderful “girl Friday!”

Hilda Bacon, Development Director: Manages donor database, writes grants for state and local funding, raises dollars for restoration work, new program development and existing program support, researches funding options and plans special fundraising events.

Kris Clayton, Production Manager: Supervises set construction, sound and light design and installation, hires, trains, and schedules carpenters and electricians, manages strike and load-in schedule, assigns stage and

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HEAR YE, HEAR YE!

Bruce A. Curless & Emily Mackell

The Ritz Theatre and The Markheim Art Center of Haddonfield are pleased to announce their collaboration to bring “Theatre in the Round” to the Haddonfield and surrounding communities. This new venture consists of a series of three productions, produced by The Ritz and presented in the newly renovated Markheim Art Center. The staging allows for the audience to be up close and involved in every moment and emotion of the performances. The productions currently scheduled for the series are “*You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*,” “*The Heidi Chronicles*,” and a to be announced “*Musical Review*.”

The collaboration between these two arts organizations will enrich the arts in both communities. Haddonfield will have access to a unique type of theatre presented by **The Ritz. The Markheim Arts Center** will benefit from The Ritz's experience in cultivating its audience by building relationships with individuals and businesses in the community.

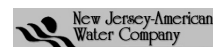
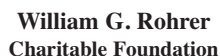
In these difficult times, it is imperative that arts organizations and communities work together to keep the arts alive and accessible to the general public. Please join us for this exciting new theatre experience!

You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown March 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22

Heidi Chronicles June 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21

Musical Review October 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18

Call The Ritz at 856.858.5230 for reservations.



Calendar Of Events

Mainstage

A Few Good Men

March 5—April 4

A Midsummer Night's Musical

April 23—May 23

Children's

The Pied Piper

March 11, 12, 13, 14

Peter Rabbit

April 1, 2, 3, 4

Special Events

Winter Training Center

Saturdays Feb. 21—March 28

Spring Training Center

Saturdays April

Markheim Art Center & The Ritz

You're a Good Man

Charlie Brown

March 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22

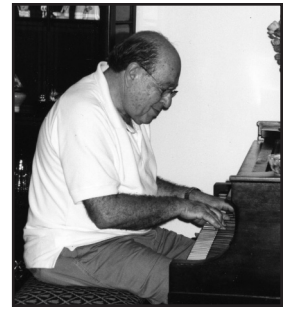
Heidi Chronicles

June 11, 12, 13, 14, 18,
19, 20, 21

A Musical Review

Oct. 8, 9, 10, 11,
15, 16, 17, 18

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST IN MEMORIAM MARSHALL GERSON

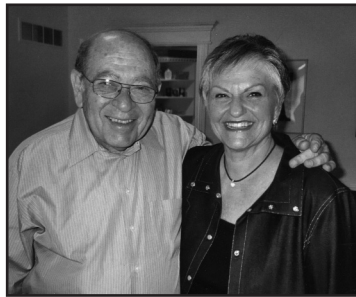


Marshall enjoying his favorite pastime at the piano

A framed personal note hangs on the wall in Bruce Curless' home, one that represents both the passing of time and of a friendship that spanned more than thirty years. The note was from a piano player Bruce inherited as "part of the package" when he directed his first show in New Jersey at Temple Emanuel in May of 1979. That pianist was Marshall Gerson, and his words in that note, "I hope we can work together again sometime" became the classic understatement! "Again sometime" began a thirty year dedication to musical theatre in South Jersey, primarily here at **The Ritz**.

It is difficult to capsulize the talent and generosity of this quiet, kind, funny, and exceptionally talented man. It is equally difficult to summarize his dedication to **The Ritz** and the impact he has had on so many who worked along side him for years. He was a mainstay during those early years when The Ritz's talent pool was all volunteer. He played every musical the Ritz did for about the first six years—gratis! He was musical director for countless shows here, and collaborated with Bruce and Steve Coar on creating **A Midsummer Night's Musical**. When asked if Marshall had a favorite show, his wife Judy replied, "Hard to say. He so enjoyed working on all of them, but he particularly loved Sondheim and the music from **Candide**."

Marshall began playing the piano at age six. By thirteen, he was giving piano lessons. He graduated from Glassboro HS and was accepted into the prestigious Yale Graduate School of Music. After completing one year there, his parents encouraged him to consider studying for a career that might be slightly



Marshall with his wife Judy

more financially stable. So, off he went to Temple for a degree in psychology and then on to dental school. After two years in the Air Force, he opened his practice in Glassboro.

Yet, this piano playing dentist, never lost sight of his creative spirit, or living a life that always included music. Bruce commented recently that "the focal point of Marshall's home was his piano. The focal point of his

life was music. He would even hum show tunes while drilling teeth!"

Marshall, in his usual generous fashion, has left all of us a gift: the realization that each of us has the opportunity to live as if it really mattered. He did. So it is with tremendous gratitude that we acknowledge his generous spirit. His light will continue to shine here in **The Ritz** for as long as musical theatre entertains audiences.

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Ritz Theatre Company

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(856) 858-5230
Fax (856) 858-0812

ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP FOR 2009

Chris Alberts



March 5 to April 4



April 23 to May 24

Chris Alberts has designed over 250 theatrical productions, tours and concerts. A few of his many accomplishments include designing for Ashford and Simpson, Kool & The Gang, Gladys Knight, and Lola Falana in Las Vegas. In addition, he designed **La Boheme** and **Die Fledermaus** for OperaDelaware at the Grand Opera House.

Here at The Ritz, he designed the lighting for **Thoroughly Modern Millie** last season, and has designed both lights and sets for **42nd Street** and **A Few Good Men**. He will also be putting his artistic touch on the lighting for our production of **A Midsummer Night's Musical**.

We welcome Chris to our talented artistic "team," and look forward to his continued work.

The Ultimate Gesture of Generosity: The Bequest

Anne Diehl was a friend of the Ritz Theatre! Hers is the first bequeathal to the theatre and one Bruce Curless hopes will be the foundation for an endowment fund .

A bequest becomes part of a person's legacy—a statement of support for something he/she valued.

Our thanks to Anne for choosing the Arts as the recipient for her generous gift.

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technical staff for productions, oversees building maintenance and set rentals.

James Scotland IV, Master Carpenter: Functions as head carpenter for set construction, manages upkeep of running sets, and whatever other jobs need attention.

Charlene Thellmann, Public Relations and Marketing: Publicizes Ritz productions and special events, produces video for The Ritz website and youtube, places newspaper, radio and television advertising, arranges interviews for actors, designers, and directors with the media, orchestrates theatre photo shoots.

Anne Knoll, Art Education Specialist and Gallery Director: Contracts artists for The Gallery, installs exhibits, functions as Editor and writes for **Art Talk**, writes study guides for all children's programming and student matinees.

Donna Keegan, Box Office and Subscriber Management: will be our newest staff member with her expected arrival in mid-March. She will work the box office, manage subscriber services, and begin to assume other "in-house" jobs as she becomes acclimated to the daily needs of the organization.

In addition to these "in-house" staff members, **Karen Dyer** works as our Children's Theatre coordinator. **John Zettlemoyer** functions as I.T. Specialist, handling all computer and web services and emergencies! **Brenda Driben** oversees costuming needs for our children's theatre company. **Harry VanSteenacker** assists the Production Manager and oversees the tracking of production budgets.

Staff members address the "unexpected" countless times each day. They occasionally sweep, mop, clean, organize, problem solve, and help each other out with jobs that are not their own. They are a band of dedicated workers behind the scenes and out of the limelight.

So, the empty space in actuality isn't empty at all, but rather full to brimming with the energy of the everyday force of those dedicated to what The Ritz is and does. A wheel is only as good as the sum of its parts—those we see and those we don't.

DELICIOUS PARTNERSHIPS!

Here at **The Ritz**, we are delighted to be partnering with many area restaurants. It is such a natural fit, as so many of our patrons pair a visit to the theatre with a pleasant dinner before or after the show.

Kunkel's seafood and steakhouse is only a mile down the White Horse Pike and a quick turn onto Kings Highway. Every group that has gone there has had a great experience. Both the food and the atmosphere bring a smile and a nod.

Our newest restaurant partner, **Cork**, is located on Haddon Avenue. You can get a cocktail or a glass of wine with one of their delicious entrees.

The Pop Shop is a casual and fun eatery in Collingswood. The food is excellent and bountiful, and they have had critical acclaim on the food networks.

Red, Hot and Blue, located in the Holiday Inn on Rt. 70, is famous for their ribs and our opening night parties. They have live music for your post show enjoyment.

Of course, you can't overlook **Newton Diner**—our next door neighbor. They are convenient to the theatre and their hours make them an easy choice before or after any of our shows.

We encourage you to support our partners. Their ads in our Stagebill include special offers when you show your **Ritz** tickets. So, please enjoy these fine restaurants and let them know you appreciate their partnership with **The Ritz**.

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Bruce A. Curlless

A Midsummer Night's Dream! I close my eyes and visions come to me. Some dark, some light but always clear. When we decided to include **A Midsummer Night's Musical** in our 2009



Season, I knew instantly what I wanted it to look like, and I felt as if I wanted to design it—from top to bottom. Not that I don't enjoy collaborating. I love it! But somehow it was different this time. Of course, we are finishing the project without Marshall Gerson, one of the three originators of this production. He was such a driving force behind the project as the composer. I suppose doing it for Marshall might explain why I wanted such a "hands on" experience this time, but also, my vision felt so strong, it didn't seem fair to impose these ideas onto another designer. So, I set out to design the set, props and the costumes by myself.

I drew my inspiration from many places. First of all, there is the music—fun, humorous, with lyrics that remain timely today. Many thanks to Andre Vermeulen for scoring the entire show and taking what Marshall did and letting it take shape again for those of us performing in the show. I was also inspired by fantasy illustrations, Gothic and Goth fashions, past and current, and a floral arrangement by Eric Schellack. Ideas came floating in from all around me.

So many people are helping me realize these ideas. Very special thanks go to Trish Reichfeld, Ginny Bandremer, Hilda Bacon and Renee McKleary, who are assisting in the construction and production of the costumes. Kris Clayton, our production manager, is a great help, taking my poor set drawings and making magic out of them with the help of James Scotland IV, our carpenter. All of this is then lit by Chris Alberts, the lighting designer, who adds that final touch to everyone's work, creating the magic you will enjoy. Our entire production staff, theatre staff, and the Board of Trustees are to be thanked for their contributions.

So you see, Marshall, the magic all started with you! I am so proud to have played my part in helping this "Dream" come true. **"... If we mortals have offended, think but this and all is mended, that you have but slumbered here, while these visions did appear!"**

Visit our website for information on the history, services, and upcoming events at the Ritz Theatre.
www.ritztheatreco.org

Art Talk The Ritz Newsletter

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WANTED: VOLUNTEERS

The generous spirit of volunteers is essential to the life of a non-profit organization. If you are interested in volunteering at The Ritz, please contact: 856•858•5230.



Yes, I Want to Make a Connection with the Ritz Theatre!

Enclosed is my contribution of: \$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 \$_____ (other)
Please print your name as you would like it to appear in the theatre program, *Stagebill*

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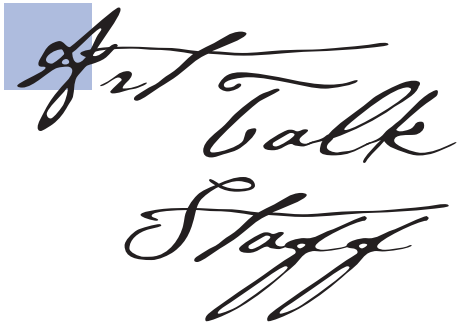
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