



~ Newsletter - Spring 2023 ~

UPCOMING SHOWS: Expect Mystery, Mirth, & Melody

By Nicole Johnson



Madeleine Smith and Rachael West in rehearsal for Close Encounters for the Hairy Kind, Monica Lorenz-Dwyer's Bigfoot adventure opening at CLOTA Center Stage starting March 3rd.

Do you believe in Bigfoot? The beloved play, written and directed by Monica Lorenz-Dwyer, will be gracing the CLOTA stage in March. Eight campers plus two Ridgeview police officers gather at Crestwood Lake campgrounds to kumbaya about Bigfoot in this lights out production. With fireflies, a campfire, and lanterns to light the way, along with woodland sounds, and a set straight out of Yosemite, this production will make you feel like you're really there! With mystery, humor, sadness, and a hefty dose of heart, *Close Encounters of the Hairy Kind* is a real crowd pleaser!

Starring Rachael West as Captain Wallis, Jonathan Blair as Officer Dixon, Steven Dwyer as Fudge, Madeleine Smith as Benjamin Hughes, Devanne Fredette as Honey Boudin, Nicole Johnson as April Abbott, Jonathan Blair as Frank, Janis Kunz as Evan Landon, K. Pearl Woolam as Big Red, and Heather McGaha as Madeline Conrad. This is a show you don't want to miss.

Next up, auditions for *CLUE the Musical* will be held on March 19th at 3pm and March 20th at 5pm at CLOTA Center Stage. Come prepared with a song to sing. Directed by Angie Sonia-Pritchard, *CLUE* promises to be a fun-filled show! And I am really excited to see a musical once again on our fantastic stage.

❖ PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

Greetings and Salutations fellow CLOTA members!

The CLOTA spring season will start off on a hairy note, with “Close Encounters of the Hairy Kind,” a Bigfoot mystery play written and directed by Monica Lorenz-Dwyer (a new director for CLOTA). Performances are scheduled for March 3rd, 4th, 10th, 11th, 17th, and 18th at 7:30pm, with a matinee on March 12th at 2pm.

The CLOTA Board is seeking to add members to our various committees and volunteer projects (such as play reading, social media, Spookhouse, costumes, fireworks booth, public relations, work parties, etc.). If you are interested in joining one (or several) of our committees/projects and adding your expertise to our existing collective, please contact us at info@clota.org.

As always, CLOTA is on the lookout for new directors as well as play suggestions. CLOTA would be more than happy to provide you with a Play Suggestion Form and/or a Director Proposal Form to complete.

Last but not least, auditions for our upcoming shows are open to everyone! Honestly, where else could you be encouraged to act out? We'd love to have you join us on the CLOTA stage!

Thank you all for your continued membership, we certainly couldn't do what we do without your support.

Best Regards,

Monica Dwyer

President, CLOTA Board of Directors

CLOTA's Annual Banquet - Celebrating What Makes Us CLOTA!

By Janis Kunz

This year's annual banquet was exciting and celebratory! The meeting room at Casey's Restaurant was filled with beautifully decorated tables, and the first event was a curated slide show of moments from the 2022 CLOTA season. Both visual treats were thanks to Angie Sonia-Pritchard and Daniel Stallings – well done, guys! The twenty attending CLOTA members and officers relived the funny, dramatic, and impressive memories captured in photographs shared from the excellent theatre made possible by the hard work and dedication of all the casts and crews of 2022!

As is customary, the directors for the upcoming shows gave presentations of their respective plays coming in 2023. Monica Dwyer regaled the audience with tantalizing details of her self-penned *Close Encounters of the Hairy Kind* (set to hit the CLOTA stage on March 3rd), describing a lights-out, campfire-themed production sure to get the hair on the back of your neck tingling. Next, Angie took the floor to

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Banquet, cont.

announce that she will be doing a musical for CLOTA's Spring show (*CLUE the Musical*) and invited the actors/singers present to please, please, please come to auditions (Mar 19/20 @3/5pm) as it'll be a lot of fun. Daniel concluded the show announcements with his pitch for *Steel Magnolias*, a play where he intends to fill Center Stage in August with the stories and pathos of the six women inside Truvy's 1980's in-home beauty parlor.

Nicole Johnson superbly provided the night's dramatic performance. She gave a captivating reading of her character's bigfoot encounter from Monica's *Close Encounters* play. Just a taste of what's to come in that "night of tall tales..."

And let's not forget the awards! There was a lot of talent and devotion to commemorate from 2022! Janis Kunz won the Firecracker Award for her explosion onto the scene: joining the Board, volunteering to be Newsletter editor, serving as assistant director and foley artist on *The Gift of the Magi*, and doing many tech jobs for *Witness for the Prosecution*. Nicole won the Carol Venturi Volunteer Award for her continuous and tireless efforts helping with everything from CLOTA's fireworks fundraiser and Spookhouse to manning the box office and concessions at each production to being our Board treasurer.



Janis and Nicole show off their awards.

The Director Awards went to Larry Lier for *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Angie for *Murder by Farce*, and Daniel for *Witness for the Prosecution*.



Larry, Angie, and Daniel – proud directors.

DIRECTOR INTERVIEW:

Monica Lorenz-Dwyer, *Close Encounters of the Hairy Kind*

By Janis Kunz

What was your inspiration for writing Close Encounters of the Hairy Kind?

Monica: “Although I’ve always been a Bigfoot buff (having read countless stories of supposed real-life encounters of this mythological man-like hairy creature), what sparked my inspiration for writing about him was hearing a first-hand encounter from my ex-husband that he had while he was on vacation in Colorado several years ago. I wrote all about it in a column for the Daily Independent (which, by the way, was also titled *Close Encounters of the Hairy Kind*). Around the same period of time, I was being encouraged to write a play by Daniel Stallings (founder of Master Mystery Productions). This was where I put my two passions into a collision course with one another and went on to write *Close Encounters of the Hairy Kind*.”

What differences are you most excited about between this new production and the original? (Staging, location, etc.)

Monica: “The first production of *Close Encounters* (back in 2019), took place in the recreation room of a local church and needless to say it was cozy. Even so, the actors made the smaller space work very well even if they did get a little more up close and personal to the audience than they would have liked. The CLOTA production will allow for scenery to be included (for example, trees, lots and lots of trees to lend to the wilderness feel which is essential to the plot setting), provide more leg room for the actors, while also allowing them to spread their creative wings when it comes to their individual blocking. In other words, physical comedy requires a lot of space to achieve maximum effect.”

What made you want to stage it at CLOTA Center Stage?

Monica: “I’ve been involved in many shows at CLOTA Center Stage over the years and not only have I made many fond memories there (both on and off stage) but I’ve also made many wonderful friends. Hence, I’d be lying if I said that it hadn’t crossed my mind a time or two (or three) to pitch *Close Encounters* to CLOTA before I actually got the nerve to do so. I have to give credit to several of my close friends (you know who you are) who not only believed in my play but also believed in me and encouraged me to pitch it when I did. The timing was right, perfect actually, as it turned out, there was a slot available and I just happened to be fresh off of a reader’s theater production of *Close Encounters* and the rest is history as they say.”

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CLOTA's New Green Room

The construction on the long-awaited green room is going well! The two included dressing rooms (pictured below) are almost finished, with lighting for applying stage make-up and hooks to hang costume pieces being installed next. The green room will be so cozy, we hope the actors make it back down to the stage in time for their cues!



Welcome A-Board

We would like to welcome Monica Dwyer as our new CLOTA president and Tish Nelson (Modlinski) and Steven Dwyer as our newest board members! Monica has contributed so much to CLOTA in the past, as an actor, a theatre mom, tech crew, and most recently as a board member. We look forward to what she will bring as our president. Tish has been a CLOTA board member in years past and has acted on the Center Stage, as well as helping to build the original stage, and she has assistant directed and stage managed its first shows and many after. Steven joined as a board member and has already been making his mark and being a driving force within the board. Happy to have you all as part of the CLOTA family!



~ Upcoming Events ~

❖ March 3rd, 4th:

Close Encounters of the Hairy Kind – Opening weekend!

@ 7:30 pm (Doors open @ 7 pm)

❖ March 10th, 11th:

Close Encounters of the Hairy Kind

@ 7:30 pm (Doors open @ 7 pm)

❖ March 12th:

Close Encounters of the Hairy Kind – Matinee

@ 2 pm (Doors open @ 1:30 pm)

❖ March 17th, 18th:

Close Encounters of the Hairy Kind – Closing weekend!

@ 7:30 pm (Doors open @ 7 pm)

CLOTA
presents

2023
Season

Based on the Parker
Brothers' Board Game

Clue

The Musical

Book by Peter DePietro

Lyrics by Tom Chiodo

Music by Galen Blum, Wayne
Barker, and Vinnie Martucci

Directed by Angie Sonia-Pritchard

Produced by special arrangement with Concord Theatricals



AUDITIONS: Sunday, March 19 at 3 p.m.

Monday, March 20 at 5 p.m.

at CLOTA Center Stage (1425 N. Inyo St.)

Come prepared with an audition song to sing!

IN REVIEW: The Gift of the Magi, directed by Daniel Stallings

By Beth Sparks-Jacques

[*The Gift of the Magi* closed in December of 2022. Here are an audience member's thoughts.]



The cast and crew of CLOTA's Christmas radio show, O. Henry's The Gift of the Magi adapted and directed by Daniel Stallings, perform at dress rehearsal. Photo by Daniel Stallings.

The Gift of the Magi, A Sweet Holiday Tale...

Most of us know the short story by O. Henry. A tale of love and sacrifice. Daniel Stallings has adapted it into a faithful radio show rendition that was performed on CLOTA's Center Stage this past Christmas.

The lead, played by Haley Puckett Towler is the charming Della, who only has \$1.87 to buy her husband Jim a Christmas gift. She sacrifices her beautiful hair so she can afford to buy him a chain for his pocket watch. Jim, played by Jon Towler, has sold his watch to buy her hair combs. The story is moved along by the narrator, a.k.a. O. Henry, played by Larry Cosner Jr.

What would a radio show be without commercials? The jingles written by Monica Dwyer added a much-needed infusion of lightness and comedy. Stallings used an ensemble [Heather McGaha, Jonathan Blair, Rachael West, Allison Mitchell, Madeleine Smith, Nicole Johnson, and Libby Mitchell] to sing the jingles and also act as back up to the main actors. We can't leave out Nicole Johnson who was wickedly good as the hairseller.

The reveal of Della losing her hair to the hairseller was a shocking and poignant moment. The actress was wearing a wig and had shorn hair underneath! It very much sold the idea of how far she would go to do something kind for her husband. As an added bonus there was a Christmas song performance by the lovely ladies Heather, Rachael, and Nicole.

I enjoyed this show from start to finish. From the near tears of Della's sacrifice to the laughter at the jingles.

Lorenz-Dwyer, cont.

What do you enjoy about directing theatre in general and Close Encounters in particular?

Monica: “Although I’ve been accused of being bossy a time or two in my lifetime, I’ve translated that into being a natural born leader (or director in this case). Seriously, my brain is hard-wired to visualize how interactions should be played out both emotionally and physically. In retrospect, I probably learned this talent from watching so much television as a kid. Interestingly, I didn’t just enjoy what I was watching for the entertainment value, but I also paid close attention to the acting and how the show was being filmed, I paid so close attention that I could (and still can) easily spot continuity errors. Although I love the details that can go into directing, I nonetheless allow for my actors to give their creative input into their characters for *Close Encounters* because I don’t feel that it should just be my way or the highway. The talent and experience that my actors have brought to the table have made my characters all that they can be.”

What do you hope audiences will take away from your comedy/mystery play?

Monica: “Although it may be a stretch for me to hope that my audiences will convert from non-believers to believers of Bigfoot after watching *Close Encounters of the Hairy Kind*, I would have at least liked to have raised an awareness of the big hairy guy in a positive, fun and comical light. While doing so, I figured it wouldn’t hurt to throw in some general positivity such as you’re never too old to change the trajectory of your life, there is always room for improvement, it’s never too late to do the right thing, once you know better, do better, believe in yourself even if no one else does, and most importantly, help protect what can’t protect itself.”

What writing or directing projects are on the horizon for you?

Monica: “In spite of risking becoming known as the local “Bigfoot Girl” I have to admit that *Close Encounters of the Hairy Kind: Part II* has definitely been rattling around in my brain for some time now, I just need to find a spare moment or two to write it all down. I’ve become very close to all things Bigfoot as well as my characters and their interesting back stories. Furthermore, I don’t think their adventures at Crestwood Lake Campground are quite over yet.”

***Close Encounters of the Hairy Kind* opens March 3rd @ CLOTA Center Stage!**

CLOTA Wall of Stars

Every year, CLOTA receives donations from individuals who see the beauty and work that we do within our theater as well as the promising future that we will have set for generations to come. These gracious benefactors have assisted us for the past 50 years and counting and we look forward to what you and others will do for us in the next 50 years. Your help is pivotal to us and your generosity should not go unnoticed; hence, the establishment of the CLOTA Wall of Stars. We would like to invite you, the members of CLOTA, to be given the opportunity to get a star on our theatre wall where your gift to our actors and audiences will be displayed and seen by all in our community.

The stars are different metals and the donor's name will be engraved where your person, generosity, and assistance will be remembered for all time. The metals of the stars depends on the amount that has been donated during the calendar year:

The Bronze Star \$50 up to \$249

The Silver Star \$250 up to \$499

The Gold Star \$500 and above

If you wish to know how to make a donation or to inquire about the Wall of Stars, please feel free to contact us for more detail and information.

Thank You!

The CLOTA Board



Monica Dwyer, *President*
K. Pearl Woolam, *Vice President*
Beth Sparks-Jacques, *Secretary*
Nicole Johnson, *Treasurer*
Josh Cotterell

Kevin La Brie
Sam Johnson
Steven Dwyer
Tish Nelson (Modlinski)
Janis Kunz, *Newsletter Editor*



Contact us @ www.clota.org or (760) 446-2411

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Banquet, cont.

The CLOTA Robe winners were recognized as well, each for their extra special work on the year's productions for which they had individually gotten the honor of wearing the historic CLOTA robe for that show's opening night. Paisley Smosna for *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Ben Bockhahn for *Murder by Farce*, Janis Kunz for *Witness for the Prosecution*, and Nicole Johnson for *The Gift of the Magi*. And last but not least, Angie Sonia-Pritchard and River Cotterell won the Florence Green Production Award for excellence in technical capacities in theatre at CLOTA.

After the applause subsided for that stellar line-up that made 2022 a triumphant return to a full year of live theatre for CLOTA, it was time to cut the cake, and what a cake it was! Monica outdid herself with a gorgeous, multi-layer masterpiece that incorporated the CLOTA logo. Her cake symbolizes the attention to detail and loving creativity that goes into the theatre productions that are staged at CLOTA. And the cake tasted scrumptious!



The final event of the banquet was the traditional 'Jeopardy' game for CLOTA aficionados. This year, Daniel and Angie put together a collection of blurry images of shows and items from CLOTA's past. With categories of Drama, Comedy, Musical, Misc, and CLOTA Building, and a buzzer for each team, it was a free-for-all to guess the most answers and snag a gift certificate for free tickets. Until some power line maintenance killed the lights to the restaurant...

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Banquet, cont.

The team with the most points thus far was crowned winner and everyone dispersed, having had an evening chock full of talk of theatre, remembrance of the memorable 2022 season, and celebration of those who make CLOTA what it is!!

~ ~ ~



*Nicole Johnson recounts her tall tale as April Abbott for
Close Encounters of the Hairy Kind.
Photo by Janis Kunz.*



*Jennifer Kunz with the gift certificates for
CLOTA tickets. Photo by Janis Kunz.*

“What’s Past is Prologue”

CLOTA is in the process of archiving its rich history, with projects like digitally scanning almost 60 years of CLOTA’s play programs. If you have any historic show-related articles or photos or any programs you would like to add to the project, please contact the Board. We want to cherish and commemorate all the great shows and talent over the years.



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CLOTA Center Stage

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