



Alton Little Theater kicks off 85th season with everything new-again in September

August 21 2018 9:23 AM

ALTON - Familiar favorites will get all shiny and new when Alton Little Theater presents back-to-back productions in September to kick off the 85th Season of live theater at the showplace.

God's Favorite by Neil Simon and the musical Always Patsy Cline by Ted Swindley were first discovered by audiences thirty years ago and both productions, although very different genres, have garnered wide audience appeal.

God's Favorite, which was Simon's first big hit is a comedic take on the biblical book of Job - complete with all the mishaps and challenges that the modern day "Joe" Benjamin must endure and still remain God's faithful follower; overcoming greed and family dysfunction is no small matter in a show that calls for the heavens to destroy Job/Joe's home every night! The production, first produced at the ALT Showplace in the 1980's was the first choice for Director Carol Hodson (who is the Artistic Director for "Curtains Up Theater Company" based in Edwardsville).

Carol has appeared at ALT in several outstanding roles and discussion evolved about forming a collaboration between the two theater groups, bringing combined energies and talents to the 85th Season opener! Indeed, Carol has cast an eclectic group of eight talented actors: Howard Bell, Anthony Tuzzo, Christy Luster, Carol Hodson, Brant McCance, Sarah Chapman-Wiser, Vince Ojeda and Aaron Mermelstein - who hail from Edwardsville, Alton and St. Louis. Gary Wilson serves as Assistant Director for the production, Kevin Frakes built the grand set, Brant McCance is brainstorming on those "special" effects, Steven Harders and Dennis Stevenson are designing lights, Ethan Handel is on board for sound, and the whole group is just waiting for audiences to appear September 14th through 23rd.

Alton Little Theater is bringing back Always Patsy Cline for just FOUR performances on September 27th, 28th, 29th and 30th. The show premiered at the Showplace four years ago and then had a very successful run at the Wildey Theater in Edwardsville two years ago. Debbie Maneke and Lee Cox recreate their personal favorite roles of Patsy Cline and fan Louise Seger and the two actresses (and best friends) recently made the trek to Nashville, TN to visit the recently opened Patsy Cline Museum and continue their on-going research about the singer's career and relationships.

Reading Patsy's handwritten letters and talking to the guides at the original Grand Old Opry, The Ryman Auditorium, has only sharpened the cast and musicians' (those bodacious "Bobcats") appreciation for Patsy as a woman and a performer. To this day, Patsy Cline is the only person to EVER invite herself to be on the Grand Old Opry Stage (otherwise it is by invitation only) but as it turned out "the gutsy little gal" became the enduring role model for female country artists and her music and her fans have continued to grow in numbers.

Family pictures released after Patsy's husband's death last year and her daughter Julie's involvement have created a beautiful space for remembering the artist who only produced six albums in her career but over eighty recordings that became hits on the radio and on TV.

The musical-story Always Patsy Cline remembers it all with an honesty and tenderness for what it was like for Patsy on the road and what friendship really means to the famous and not-so-famous. So Debbie and Lee (along with Director Diana Enloe and those rascals in the band under the direction of Steve Loucks) invite you to come on down to the honky-tonk and see a great musical, right after you come and see a great comedy at the Showplace.

The 85th Season sees some changes in production runs, with musicals playing for eight performances at the Showplace and plays running for seven performances, with evening performances at 7:30 pm and two Sunday matinees at 2pm.

Box Office hours are M-F, 10am to 2pm, and patrons can make ticket arrangements. Tickets are just \$20 for plays this season and \$25 for musicals. The ALT Website, altonlittletheater.org, can keep theater-lovers informed about ALL the upcoming productions at the Showplace and throughout the Riverbend Community.

Interviews and photos can be arranged with Director Hodson (carolhods@gmail.com) OR ALT's PR Director, Lee Cox (psychmkt@att.net)

You'll be laughing and havin' a real good time in September at the Alton Little Theater!