

Why RED HERRING?

by David Ceccarini

Our next offering, RED HERRING by Michael Hollinger, is unmistakably a flat-out comedic riot. It's one of those scripts that makes you laugh just reading silently by yourself. We've got a terrific cast to deliver the fun, but also the heart. Great comedy derives its greatness from the truth underneath, from characters grappling deliberately with the dire circumstances and challenges in front of them, unaware that what they say and do might be hilarious to the onlooker. And, in retrospect, the circumstances swirling around 1952 America - when *RED HERRING* is set - can be seen as incredibly challenging, and to me, unendingly fascinating.

Probably because I started life in 1954, I've had a strong curiosity about what the world was like then, as well as what came before and the connections to what has transpired up to the present day. Most of us Baby Boomers are the product of parents who endured the Great Depression, served the country during the Second World War and emerged to benefit from economic conditions that provided unprecedented opportunity for security and advancement.

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Images of the time and in our memories reflect accelerated consumerism, pent-up war savings and an unfulfilled demand for goods and services: houses, cars and appliances, innovative products suddenly deemed "essential" by their promoters. Television was exploding: a powerful new form of entertainment and national communication was emerging, perfect for advertising ... and also for demagogues.

WISCONSIN'S OWN

Joe McCarthy's demagoguery over communism emerges in *RED HERRING*, mostly in the form of a couple of brief TV clips. They're reminders of Tailgunner Joe's extreme stance and reckless attacks on reputation. From our distant perspective, America's anti-communist fervor of the 1950s is often noted with a knowing 'tsk-tsk' as hysteria and witch-hunting. However, we sell our history short if we ignore the actual communist threats that were prevalent in

the world of post World War II, leading into the Fabulous Fifties.

ALLIES

During the globe's second great conflagration, the United States and

communist Soviet Union worked as allies to defeat the Axis Powers. The Soviets absorbed tremendous, punishing blows from the Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe. Millions of Russians - soldiers and civilians - were sacrificed in defense of their homeland as Hitler made his fatal decision to open up the Eastern Front. Finally done in by Russia's brutal winter, it's no wonder that the Soviets began their inevitable advance toward a brutal victory of their own, culminating at the Elbe River where they celebrated with American troops and then pushed on to Berlin.

Continued, next page



Why RED HERRING continued

Shortly before that historic meeting of two great armies, the ambitious and headstrong leader of the Free French, General Charles De Gaulle, had forced his way into Paris to prevent France's communists from establishing a new French government upon liberation from the Nazis. De Gaulle achieved his goal and though the French communists remained present, they did not achieve real power.



The Allied occupation of Germany and in the eastern zone, Berlin, was a conflicted and troubled affair from the start. The Soviets had battered, raped and pillaged their way into Europe's once-great capital city [already laid waste by Allied bombing] wreaking vengeance for their horrific losses at home. From the West came the dictum that the defeated, emaciated Germans should receive no aid, no comfort, no consideration of any kind above the barest of minimums. Germany's industrial capacity was systematically destroyed; she would never again be allowed to arm for war.

FRIEND NO MORE

But for the next three years, the Soviet occupation became more obstructionist, devious and aggressive toward Berliners and their Western occupiers alike. On June 22, 1948, diplomatic relations broke down completely and two days later, the Soviets blocked all traffic and supplies, especially food and fuel, coming into Berlin. It seemed their aim was to starve the people into accepting Soviet policies and government, enlisting their cooperation in driving the Americans, French and British out.

Arguably, this single act, perhaps more than any other, changed the world. While a few were adamant in wanting to call the Soviets' bluff, President Truman and his advisors did not want to risk open warfare. The West had quickly de-militarized post-war, and by 1948 were outnumbered in the region by more than 5-to-1. Had open war broken out, there would not have been enough military opposition to prevent the Soviets from occupying the entire European continent. The Iron Curtain might very well have been drawn along the Atlantic coast.

FOOD, NOT BOMBS

But quietly, modestly, a miraculous effort to supply Berlin by air had begun. For nearly a year, despite logistical nightmares, political pessimism and ever-challenging weather, US air crews and the citizens of Berlin were locked into a life-and-death commitment to preserve both life and democracy. Berliners persevered with even less than before but together with the Airlift, they gave new purpose to the Western powers to withstand any further advance by the Soviets. The communist blockade – essentially trying to starve a city into submission – eventually turned into a public relations nightmare. After nearly a year, the battle had been won. It was arguably the first Cold War victory for the West, and perhaps its most important one.

Succeeding events added to the tension. To name a few: August, 1949, the Soviets tested their first atomic bomb. October, 1949, Mao's Chinese communist revolution declared victory. June, 1950, North Korean communist troops [with Chinese and Soviet support] invaded South Korea. May, 1954, Ho Chi Minh's communist Vietnamese forces prevailed over the French.

In the midst of unbridled prosperity in the Great 48, there must have been a non-peaceful, uneasy feeling about the world at large, and consequently, within our own borders. Reflecting then on Michael Hollinger's crazy, Cold War comedy, RED HERRING, he seems to be tapping into this tension of the times, keeping his characters on edge: wary, suspicious and twitchy as they deal with their dire circumstances. This kind of energy serves the comedy well, as it also tends to keep the audience guessing, inquisitive and surprised. Hollinger has done a masterful job at arranging the surprises, and that usually means you're in for a good time.

See you at the theatre.

-David C.

Next Act patrons have always been strong supporters of arts education. They have supported Next Act's educational programming for many



years and have been particularly generous with our Next Actors: Summer Theatre for Teens program. Several Bravo Next Act fundraisers have seen Werner standing up to challenge the other attendees to match funding for Next Act's education initiatives – always a great success.

Sadly, we lost our patron, donor and friend, Sue, this summer. Born June 17, 1937 in Milwaukee, Sue graduated from Milwaukee Washington High School in 1955 and later attended Wisconsin State College. During her time in college, she served on the Student Interest and Life Committee that was part of the formation of UW-Milwaukee. She was also the City Desk Editor of the UWM Post and was a member of the UWM Student Government. It was there Sue met Werner, whom she married in 1958. They lived in Brookfield for a while until they settled in Sheboygan.

Werner and Sue had three children. Their mother taught them the nuances of caring for various live critters [snakes, crabs, dogs, etc.], accepting many as pets, and they fondly remember her ringing the cow bells to call everyone home for dinner. She was Werner's loving, supportive, collaborative life partner and wife for more than 63 years.

Sue leveraged her leadership skills to develop a local neighborhood park, a teenager-managed teen center. She made her stage acting debut with the Brookfield Players. Once the children were in school, she returned to UWM and graduated in 1972 with a BA in English/Mass Communications.

Sue had many interests and hobbies. Her interest in boating and sailing led to being accepted as one of the first female members of the Sheboygan Yacht Club, where she became a certified boat lift crane operator. She held the position of Executive Secretary of the Lake Michigan Sail Racing Association for more than ten years. In collaboration with Windway Capital, Sue was instrumental in developing major portions of the Ice Age Trail. She also served as a Board member for the Sheboygan Historical Society. Her interest in theater continued with the

Sheboygan Theater Company as playbill editor for more than 15 years, actor, backstage support and a member of the Board of Directors. Her dedication was rewarded with a Lifetime Membership.

After retirement and a move to Door County and Florida in the mid-90s, she was an active member of the Platinum Point Yacht Club [Florida] Olympic Qualification Committee for Soling class competitors. In Door County, she was a member of Shepherd of the Bay Lutheran Church and was involved with the Ellison Bay Women's Club, which inspired the establishment of the Susan M. Krause Women's Scholarship Fund. She also served on the Board of Directors of the Sister Bay Historical Society.

Throughout her life, Sue enjoyed a myriad of hobbies: world travel, gardening, reading, theater, Sheephead and crossword puzzles [always doing the New York Times puzzles in ink]. In addition to Next Act Theatre, Sue and Werner supported organizations such as Secure Futures, Door Shakespeare, Northern Sky Theatre and the Marshfield Clinic Foundation Pediatric Oncology Angel Fund as well as a variety of other worthy local non-profits.

In honor of his late wife, Werner was inspired to create the Sue Werner Next Actors Scholarship Fund. Two students each year, either graduating seniors of Next Actors or alumni, who study a theatre discipline in a Wisconsin-based college or university, can submit an application to be considered for a \$1,500 scholarship.

We hope to initiate this program by the end of this year and announce the inaugural scholarship winners at next spring's Bravo Next Act fundraising gala. We thank Werner for this generous act on behalf of Sue, whom we will miss very much. We are grateful to have an opportunity to encourage careers in the performing arts with a way to also honor and remember a woman who lived life to the fullest, loved the theatre and held a strong belief in the power of education.



Susan and Werner Krause

Mary MacDonald Kerr and Bo Johnson reprise their roles in *RED HERRING* after 16 years! We sat down and asked what's changed for them since 2005:

Mary MacDonald Kerr



"I suppose what has changed is that, although my age has stayed the same, my children have grown up, gone off to college, received degrees and one has even gotten married!

This play couldn't come at a better time- it's perhaps the funniest script I've ever worked with and the world really needs a fantastically funny, smart and in the end, all about love, story!"

Bo Johnson

"Unsurprisingly, whereas Mary has maintained her eternal youth and beauty, I have aged rapidly into decrepitude.



As far as the approach to the script; I'm guessing that the casting of the young and vivacious Kelly Doherty, known as a Milwaukee theatre treasure, to play the romantic interest of myself, known as a Milwaukee theatre landfill, will require some creative analysis as to how the relationship evolved. I look forward to exploring the possibilities, but at the moment I have to go yell at kids to get off my lawn."



1952 FUN FACTS

COST OF LIVING:

- Average income \$3,850/year
- New House \$9,075
- New Car \$1,754
- Average rent \$80/month
- Tuition to Harvard \$600/year
- Movie Ticket 70¢
- Gasoline 20¢/gallon
- Postage Stamp 3¢

TV'S TOP TEN

1. I Love Lucy
2. Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts
3. Arthur Godfrey and His Friends
4. Dragnet
5. Texaco Star Theatre
6. The Buick Circus Hour
7. The Colgate Comedy Hour
8. Gangbusters.
9. You Bet Your Life
10. Fireside Theatre

2021 FUN FACTS

COST OF LIVING:

- Average income \$65,836/year
- New House \$298,432
- New Car \$45,031
- Average rent \$856/month
- Tuition to Harvard \$51,143/year
- Movie Ticket \$9.16
- Gasoline \$3.48/gallon
- Postage Stamp 58¢

TV/STREAMING'S TOP TEN

1. Only Murders in the Building
2. Sex Education
3. This Is Us
4. What We Do in the Shadows
5. Equalizer
6. Squid Game
7. Law & Order: Organized Crime
8. Midnight Mass
9. Chicago P.D.
10. Dopesick

Members of the Next Act staff and Friends of Next Act Theatre volunteers sold concessions at Milwaukee Brewers games this season to raise money, which ended up sponsoring *THREE VIEWINGS!*

All in all, this dedicated group worked 12 regular-season games, two playoff games and two days at the Wisconsin State Fair. Next Act volunteers served everything from sausages and pretzels to



loaded fries, chicken sandwiches and even craft beer. Through their hard work, **they raised more than \$18,000** for Next Act's 2021-22 season!

Thanks to all our "Friends" who pitched in to support us!



Thanks for Staying Safe with Us

Our return to live theatre this season looked a little different than past seasons, with safety measures in place (which will stay in place for *RED HERRING* and the rest of our season) to protect our staff, our artists and YOU from COVID-19.

We were very thankful to hear such enthusiastic feedback from patrons about the safety measures we put in place. *THREE VIEWINGS* audience members said things like:

"Next Act was my first outing to a venue. I was like a child. So very happy to be in a darkened theater and watch such terrific performances."

"I felt comfortable and safe in the theater."

"...a very good balance between a feeling of safety and a feeling of pleasant relaxation."

Thank you for doing your part to help us stay safe – we can't wait for a healthy, hilarious run of *RED HERRING!*



Light the Hoan



On Friday, September 24, opening night of *THREE VIEWINGS*, the Hoan Bridge was lit up in Next Act's colors to celebrate our return to live theatre! Thanks to Joyce Mielke and Light the Hoan for making such a beautiful evening possible!

We've got the perfect holiday gift! Give the gift of theatre in a "brand" new way – merchandise from Next Act Theatre! Have a fan of Next Act on your gift list? Now you can treat them to a limited edition screened cocktail glass (\$8, or a set of four for \$24), a trendy Next Act baseball cap (\$20), a Next Act logo facemask (\$10) and an array of colorful Next Act ecologically-friendly water bottles (\$10). Perhaps add a gift certificate to see a show and make it a complete Next Act package! Call 414-278-7780 or visit us in person Monday through Friday 12 PM to 5 PM to finish your holiday shopping!



\$20



\$10



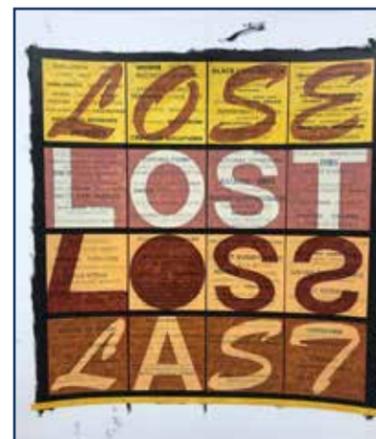
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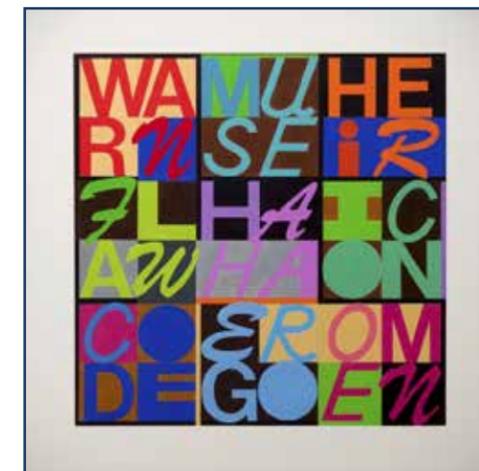
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each

Charles F. Wickler, our guest artist for *RED HERRING*, is literally a man-of-letters, or more specifically, words. His use of text as his primary medium is somewhat a "red herring" in that at first glance his work may appear to be merely decorative, playful designs of colorful text. But they are much more. Upon closer inspection, we find carefully chosen words meant to provoke. We find text over found images that confront norms or illuminate current events.

"Our culture is increasingly based on visual imagery. A key component of the world is text. Text informs, stimulates, indoctrinates, sells and/or manipulates. My art uses text alone or with a variety of images in multiple media. Sometimes the text is the work of art. In other works, the text expands or complements a found image that creates a conceptual interplay. These works are not meant to be decorative. They are meant to confront the viewer to stop and react to an image in a new context." – C.F. Wickler 2021



Wickler is an award-winning Waukesha artist and art educator whose work is featured in numerous public and private collections throughout the country. He has exhibited in group and solo shows from Wisconsin to Texas, from Michigan to Pennsylvania, including a solo show at the Arnold Katzen Gallery in New York City. And now we are honored to have him at Next Act Theatre.



WANT TO BE P.C.? – Producer's Circle, That Is!

by Jane Flieller



Next Act recently held its annual Producer's Circle event. Each fall, donors who generously contribute \$1,000 a year or more are treated to a sneak peek of the first show of the season. Following a reception and open bar in the lobby, our guests move to the rehearsal hall to see several snippets from the play. They have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the play and the process with the director, actors and stage manager. Members then tour the set in the theatre where the rehearsal process will move the next day as lights, costumes and sound are added. Consider a gift of \$1,000 or more this year and be with us next fall for the Producer's Circle event!

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SEASON SPONSORS



Sex! Murder! Commies! It's 1952: America's gonna blow the H-bomb, the voters like Ike and everyone loves Lucy on Monday nights. Meanwhile, Joe McCarthy's daughter just got engaged to a Russian spy and hard-boiled detective Maggie Pelletier has to figure out what Velveeta cheese and kippers can tell her about the stiff they just fished out of Boston Harbor. Hang onto your fedora: the cops are quick, the jokes are rapid-fire ... and the spies are just plain hot, if you catch our drift.

NOVEMBER 24 - DECEMBER 19, 2021						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			24 Preview 7:30	Thanksgiving	26 Opening 7:30	27 4:30 8:00
28 2:00			1 1:30 7:30	2 7:30	3 7:30	4 4:30 8:00
5 2:00			8 1:30 7:30	9 7:30	10 7:30	11 4:30 8:00
12 2:00	13 7:30		15 7:30	16 7:30	17 7:30	18 4:30 8:00
19 2:00	P Personal Preview (Begins 30 minutes prior to curtain) T Talkback S Sunday Night Insights \$ Pay What You Can					

Directed by: David Ceasarini

Featuring: Mary MacDonald Kerr, Dylan Bolin, Eva Nimmer, Zach Thomas Woods, Kelly Doherty and Bo Johnson

Virtual viewing option available through Broadway on Demand. Call or visit the website for more information or tickets.