

Community Theater Helps Community Cause

Yolanda Reyes
Staff Writer

The Aurora Studio Theatre hasn't been around for long, but it's already started making an impact on local organizations that benefit Loudouners in need.

The studio got off the ground in November 2004 after three years of labor by Artistic Director Meredith Bean McMath, a former board member of the Not Just Shakespeare Company. In her efforts, she brought on board heavy hitters such as Gallery 222 Executive Director Gale Waldron, Franklin Park Performing and Visual Arts Theater Manager Jeff Stern and Loudoun Valley High

School drama teacher Ike Stoneberger to sit roundtable with her on the theater group's board.

The troupe hit the ground running with its debut performance of the Louisa May Alcott favorite *Little Women* and now with its performance of *The Pajama Game* Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 3 p.m. April 1 to 17 at the Old Stone School in Hillsboro.

Originally a book by George Abbot and Richard Bissell, *The Pajama Game* was mainly the work of fresh, untried talent and was the first complete musical comedy score for both composer/lyricists Richard Adler and Jerry Ross. Perhaps because of its youthful enthusiasm, the name belies a strong plotline that

deals with labor problems involving factory workers with a strike as a pivot of the plot. The largely female cast takes center stage in the musical comedy without fancy costumes and with comparatively little sex appeal. All of these facts were somewhat unfortunate for a 1950 musical comedy, yet the musical persevered and went on to become one of the greatest successes in the history of the Broadway theater. It was the eighth musical to achieve a run in excess of a thousand performances and became a successful motion picture in 1957 under the direction of Abbott starring Hollywood darling Doris Day.

It seems no surprise then that the benefactor for this performance would be the

Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter.

Throughout the performances, the theater group will accept donations for the shelter and those who would really like to get into the act have the opportunity to dance the night away and do a little good at the same time at one evening performance.

There will be an actual pajama party during the April 16 show. The Grande Finale Fundraiser Pajama Party, which will begin just after the show, will feature refreshments and '50s records. Participants will get the chance to dance with cast members, draw for door prizes and bid during an auction of items, mediated by caller and Aurora actor Phil

Continued On Page B3



The girls of The Pajama Game: Aurora Theatre actresses will take the stage to benefit LAWS in April.

Theater

Continued From Page B1

Erikson, founder of the former Wise Guys Inc. Comedy Auction Team in Richmond, who was last seen on stage as Professor Bhaer in the theater group's production of *Little Women*. Audience members who bring a donation for the Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter will receive a ticket for a chance to win a door prize. To qualify, partygoers must bring any of the following items: a check to LAWS for \$25 or more; \$10, \$15 or \$20 gift certificates from Target, Wal-Mart or a grocery store to meet the immediate needs of families in crisis; or a brand new pair of women's or children's pajamas.

Later this year Aurora Studio Theatre plans to present John Kesserling's *Arsenic and Old*

Lace, which will run on the Hillsboro stage from Oct. 14 to 30 and will feature an Elderberry Wine Festival Oct. 29. As part of the troupe's mission the company is also providing summer classes. Participants will be able to take a class in basic improv with Erikson and McMath or a class in professional makeup, which will take students through a three-day primer Diane El-Shafey and Michelle Nixon. Dates for classes have yet to be announced.

Advance tickets for performances of *The Pajama Game* cost \$12 for adults and \$10 for seniors and are available at Final Draft Books in Purcellville or online at www.aurorastudiotheatre.org. Tickets at the door cost \$15 for adults and \$12 for seniors.

Because of adult language, *Pajama Game* is not recommended for children. ■