

Company of Musical Theatre 5th Annual Alumni Newsletter

This is the fifth anniversary of the CMT Alumni Newsletter! Everyone I've managed to keep in touch with has stayed busy in their lives, and it's wonderful to hear that everyone is doing well. As in the past four years, here are the little tidbits I've managed to collect about where our alumni members have been and what they've been up to....

Theatre in the Ottawa area

Let's start looking back at what took place in Ottawa, because there are always so many things going on in theatre and in music, and almost everywhere you look, someone from the Company of Musical Theatre is either on stage or helping out in the wings.

The Ottawa Little Theatre started 2006 with a production of *Light Sensitive* in which **Brian Cano** appeared. In June, **Sharron McGuirl** appeared as Tasha Blumberg in OLT's production of *Isn't It Romantic*, and **Robin Guy** joined OLT for their presentation of *The Dershowitz Protocol* at the Eastern Ontario Drama League in November.

In the west end of town, **Barry Caiger** joined the Kanata Theatre in February as Frederick Fellowes in *Noises Off*, and **Bob Lackey** appeared in *Staff Room* in May. And just on the Quebec side of the border, **Beki Henderson** and **Shawna Morgan** appeared in the first production by the Aylmer Community Theatre, *Perfect Wedding*.



When it came to musicals, there were many productions we were involved in. In their annual offering, the Savoy Society presented *H.M.S. Pinafore* with **Allison Woyiwada** providing musical direction and featuring the choreography of **Joan Scarcella**. In May, Suzart Productions presented "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" with **Ian Fitze** accompanying and **Alain Patry** appearing as Simeon. **Ian** continues his involvement with Suzart as musical director for their upcoming production of *Little Shop of Horrors* which will be choreographed by **Tanya Chang**.

In March, CMT alumni **Brian Boggs** provided musical direction and **Linda Fournier**

choreographed the Orpheus production of *West Side Story*. Also included on the production side and in the cast were **John McGovern** (accompanist), **Tanya Chang** (dance captain), **Shawna Morgan** (Maria), **Ed Librada** (Bernardo) and **Tim Hillock** (Officer Krupke). **Tanya** was back on-stage for Orpheus's June production of *Victor/Victoria* which featured **Gabriel Leury** as Musical Director and **Debbie Millett** as Choreographer. **Debbie** also filled in for one of the dancers on the final performance! She'll also be one of the choreographers for Orpheus's 100th anniversary show *The Spirit of Orpheus*, which was written by Michael Gareau and CMT alumnus **John McGovern**. And after an absence of over 10 years from the limelight, **Linda Fournier** returned to the stage as a member of the chorus in the fall production of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. In the new year, be sure to check out Orpheus's productions of *Guys and Dolls* which features **Nicole Milne** (Miss Adelaide), **Shawna Morgan** (Sarah Brown), **Derek Eyamie** (Benny Southstreet), **Sharron McGuirl** (General Carwright) and **Tim Hillock** (Calvin).

In recent years, the Zucchini Grotto Theatre Company has come on the scene as Ottawa's only professional musical theatre company, and **Nicole Milne** continued her involvement with the company in their November presentation of *Divas*. She was joined by **Shawna Morgan**, and they were accompanied by Wendy Berkelaar on piano and CMT alumni **Pierre Huneault** on drums and **Neil Bateman** on bass.

Of course, musical theatre is just one way to get your music fix. In February, **Shannon Mercer** returned to Ottawa to perform in *Return of the Stars* at Canterbury High School. **James Caswell** provided accompaniment for this performance, and **Rachel Hamilton** performed in the choir. In November, **Shannon** was back on the local stage with Opera Lyra Ottawa in *Simply Opera!*

And for musical theatre entertainment of another sort, Ottawa residents can also enjoy dinner at an Eddie May Murder Mystery which often features CMT alumni **Shawna Morgan** and **Robin Guy**.

Watch out for those musicians!

If you do a search on the web for names of musicians who graced the pit during CMT productions, there are quite a few who are keeping busy pursuing their musical endeavours.

Scott Chancey, violinist and violist, was accepted at the Henry Mancini Institute in July 2006 for a one month program focusing on jazz, improvisation and film music. He is also a member of the Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra. In June, **Scott** appeared as part of The Fourteen Days Trio at the University of Ottawa alongside trio member **Julie Hacquard** (flute).

This year also saw the release of the debut album of C2K Trio featuring **Kenji Omae** on saxophone (<http://cdbaby.com/cd/c2ktrio>). This jazz trio is active in the flourishing jazz scene in Seoul, Korea!

Also pursuing her jazz passion on the other side of the globe is **Siobhan McGovern** who is currently the resident singer at The Oriental Hotel in Bangkok, Thailand. **Siobhan** also launched her website this year: www.siobhanmcgovern.com.

Much closer to home, several CMT musicians continue to pursue their musical interest as an extra curricular activity. **Tanya Chang, Ruth Mendell, Doug Cumming, Steve Sauder** and **David Laffradi** continue to play with the Nepean Concert Band which appears each summer at Andrew Haydon Park, and annually at Centrepointe Theatre in February. The NCB also recently made their first appearance at the Canadian War Museum as part of the museum's Remembrance Week activities. There are also other musicians playing with other local groups, so they're not forgotten, but we've lost touch with those members (for the time being).

Give my regards to Broadway...

November saw the opening of *Mary Poppins* at the New Amsterdam Theatre in New York City, featuring **Nicolas Dromard** as swing. And, as announced last year, **Jen Waiser** has been cast in Michael Boubli and Claude-Michel Shonberg's *The Pirate Queen* which will open on Broadway at the Hilton Theatre on April 5, 2007 with previews beginning a month in advance. (www.thepiratequeen.com)

Theatre outside Ottawa

Stratford has almost become a sure bet when it comes to spotting CMT alumni on-stage, and this year was no exception. **Adrienne Gould** appeared as Regina Engstrand in *Ghosts* while **Gabriel Wolinsky** appeared in *South Pacific*. **Adrienne** is already confirmed to appear in the role of Yasmin in next season's production of *Pentecost*.

Also in southern Ontario, **Sarah Connell** was appearing in her first starring role as Sandy in Stage West Mississauga's production of *Grease* until February, and **Jen Waiser** was playing the part of Ado Annie in Hamilton for Theatre Aquarius's production of *Oklahoma!* The Stirling Festival Theatre also presented



Victor/Victoria featuring **Lori Nancy Kalamanski** in the title role. **Debbie Millett** and **Tanya Chang**, fresh off their production of the same show in Ottawa, went to see **Lori's** production and were able to say hello after the show. In March, **Lori** will be performing at the Royal Alexandra Theatre in Toronto in *e-Deentity*.

Also within Ontario, **Mark Allen** appeared at Toronto's Elgin Theatre in the Ross Petty production of *Aladdin*, and **Laura Caswell** was the spider in Sudbury Theatre's *James and the Giant Peach*. **Laura** also choreographed the Georgetown Globe Productions presentation of *Urinetown*.

On the east coast, **Stephanie Cadman** worked her magic on stage in *Celtic Blazes* at the Charlottetown Festival. She was back in Toronto in *Stepcrew* at the Toronto Dance Theatre at the end of October and followed that up with a tour of the U.S.

with *Bowfire*. (www.stephaniecadman.com)

Nicolas Dromard also wrapped up his stint with the U.S. Tour of *Wicked*. **Rory McGlynn** was in Hamilton in November performing alongside other operatic singers in *A Mozart Celebration*. And **Ericka Yang** participated in Dance Break 2006 which gives the opportunity to new choreographers to showcase their work.

Film & Television

This year has seen the breakthrough of CBC's *The Doodlebops* to a larger market. The group, which features **Chad McNamara** as Rooney Doodle, has continued its #1 kids' show, been on tour with a live show, released DVDs and CDs, and found their way onto the American market through the Disney channel. One of the stops on their tour was at Centrepointe Theatre where hundreds of kids were thrilled to see the multi-talented Doodles. (www.doodlebops.com)

And, since her starring role as Shania Twain in *Shania: A Life in Eight Albums* last year, **Meredith Henderson** has been busy filming several movies and television series including *Heartstopper* (as Sara Wexler), *The Dresden Files*, *The Assassination of Jesse James* (which stars Brad Pitt as Jesse James), *Everest* (featuring a cast of well-known Canadian actors) and *Jumper*. A fifth project, *The Best Years* is in pre-production.



Chad Connell also appeared in a recurring role as Sammy Sorenson on CBC television in *Rumours* and has completed filming of the movie *Prom Wars* due out in 2007. **Michael Falcucci** was in the male ensemble of the film *Roxana* which received its world premiere screening in November at the 15th Moving Pictures Festival of Dance on Film and Video. And, **Alison Smyth** (www.alisonsmyth.com) was busy working on the set of *Hairspray* as a Council Auditionee/Beauty Queen. The movie, starring John Travolta and Michelle Pfeiffer, is due out next summer.

Other Stuff

If you weren't watching Canadian Idol this summer, you missed the opportunity to catch **Derek Eyamie** as earned his way to a spot in the top 50 singers. On the festival front, **Jonathan Estabrooks** was the winner of a Kingsway Foundation Scholarship at the Kiwanis Music Festival of Greater Toronto.



In September, **Sarah Connell** married Matt Cassidy who had appeared on stage in *The Lord of the Rings* early in the year. He's slated to perform at the Stratford Festival in the new year as well.

And in April, **Robin Guy** and her husband Stephen Lenser became the proud parents of a little girl, Miriam, sister for Samuel. Miriam waited just long enough to allow mom to see Bernadette Peters at the NAC, but after that she wasn't about to miss anymore wonderful music and she made her own Ottawa debut the very next day.

In the new year, also look out for **Maya Chang**'s business venture with husband Ryan Gray. Maya and Ryan have started a canoe touring company called RippleFX, so if you're ever visiting New Zealand's north island, call them up. Their website will be located at www.Ripplefx.co.nz.

Last Word

Looking back at five years of maintaining the CMT Alumni website and writing these newsletters, I feel honoured to have crossed paths with so many talented individuals. While CMT may not necessarily have been the catalyst which launched so many performance careers, I can't help but think that it did have a special magic to it that is being carried now around the world by its members. At the very least, it was a meeting place for us all, and I know I'm grateful for the opportunity it gave me to explore the performing arts in such a professional atmosphere.

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and have a happy & safe holiday season!

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