



LET THE MAGIC BEGIN. CENTERPIECES

The Carrollwood Cultural Center

Volume 2 Number 2

Serving all of Hillsborough County

Salerno Settles In

Two weeks ago, the Center stage was transformed into a Midwestern prairie. Twenty-five actors sang and danced their hearts out in a rousing, polished performance of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* It was as good as Broadway — which means it was as good as it gets. How did the Center come to host this stunning production?

Simple. Salerno Theatre Company, which presented *Oklahoma!*, is the new resident theatre company of the Center. Salerno, a professional regional company that specializes in musical theatre, lives here now.

Salerno's arrival is cause for celebration all around. As resident company, Salerno and its sister, American Concert Company, will stage all their shows at the Center. In return, the Center will make available its stage, facilities and storage areas.

"We were looking for a theatre to partner with and the Center was ideal," says Mike Mathews, Salerno's founder and artistic director. "This is exactly what we were hoping for as a place to settle in."

What does settling in mean? In part, as with any new home, it means a place to store your stuff. Over the years, Salerno has accumulated a few odds



Mike Mathews as Curly and Hilary Kraus as Laurey in *Oklahoma!*

and ends: a portable 18-foot custom-made proscenium, eight commercial storage units full of props and costumes, portable lighting, a bubble machine, a snow machine, several fog machines, a 7-foot bridge/walkway that spans the entire stage, and a disco ball. All are now stored backstage or at the Annex.

"In the theatre, you never throw anything out," Mike comments. "Everything can always be reused, repainted, recombined or repaired."



Home Town, New Company

Mike graduated from The University of Tampa with degrees in Communications and Musical Theatre. He studied voice and acting for five years with Peter Palmer, star of the original *Lil' Abner*. After performing with several professional companies on the East Coast, Mike decided to start his own company in Tampa. "I grew up here. I wanted to use the resources and talent here in a wise way — to be able to bring the best musical theatre to this community. I felt we could do better and put on

higher quality performances." Founded in 2003, Salerno's mission is to present outstanding musical theatre that touches the lives of the company and the community. "I want to help nurture the spirit of this place with theatre," observes Mike. "If people can forget their problems for two hours and go out with a smile on their faces, we've done our job." At the end of every Salerno performance, the actors mingle with the audience — a signature touch that symbolizes the company's deep sense of connection

Article continues on next page.



Capria Pichette as "Annie Oakley" in *Broadway in Concert*

Like most people who start new theatre companies, Mike began by relying on people he knew. This has led to exceptional collaborations. Peter Palmer, who lives in the Bay Area, directed Salerno's first production of *Lil' Abner*. Marguerite Bennett, former chair of Speech, Theatre and Dance at the University of Tampa, was their choreographer for several productions.

Mike named Salerno for the town in Italy where his family once lived, because he knew that a theatre group becomes a family. "Most members of the company have been with us since the beginning. If you look at the roster, you will see the same names in half the shows." Like Woody Allen, Salerno prefers to use the same actors. "However," remarks a smiling Mike, "we're more stable than Woody Allen — and I like to think that I'm better looking." Mike is especially proud that many of the troupe's performers have gone on to become full-time professionals.

Jack of All Trades

As artistic director, Mike has overall responsibility for all aspects of a production. He writes scripts, orchestrates music, acts and sings. He frequently fills in with carpentry, lighting, costumes, or anything else that needs to be done. "I can do everything except dance and choreograph. I'm the jack of all trades, master of none," Mike observes. "I don't claim to be any good; I claim to screw it up less than the next guy."

For *Oklahoma!*, Mike built the sets from old props. The

with its community.

Mike relishes a challenge. "Tell me what I can't do and I'll do it just to prove you're wrong," he remarks. "People felt that many of Salerno's performances were too ambitious. But we wanted to push the envelope. We're a professional company. The difference is the overall quality."

Capria Pichette, resident choreographer and performer, agrees. "The people who work with us are experienced and they live their roles 100% while they're on stage. That's the difference in Salerno."

main addition was a donated, rollable dance floor that covers the entire Center stage. The floor provides crucial support for the company's dancers.

The ability to wear several hats is not new to him. Mike has been singing country music since age 4. He has been a baseball player, a teacher of women's self-defense classes, a founder and producer of student-run TV stations and producer/audio engineer for a nationally syndicated radio show. Currently Mike also runs a web design/video/graphics studio.

As for Choreography...

Capria, who directs the company's dancers, has been with the group "since Day One." She has watched the company grow in size and ambition.

Capria herself has grown with the troupe. She heard about Salerno while attending USF. Starting out as an ensemble performer, she was tapped by Marguerite Bennett to choreograph a children's show at the University of Tampa. She has also played lead and supporting roles in a variety of local theatre companies.

When she reads scripts, Capria visualizes the actors' movements. She draws diagrams, uses familiar words to describe the motions (for example, in *Oklahoma!*, "diamond" means the dance step of spreading the knees while keeping the feet together), and goes through the moves with each actor. "I want them to be doing it the right way from the beginning, because then they don't have to unlearn the wrong way."

The Work of the Play

Musical theatre is a complex, multi-tiered effort. After deciding on a production, the company must design sets and costumes, and work out the script, music, orchestration and choreography. Casting is one of the last things done. "The whole thing represents an unbelievable amount of work," observes Mike.

In addition, the company customizes each performance for the venue. "We use the same number of performers, but we will arrange them differently, depending on the theatre," says Mike. The Center is one of the smallest theatres in which Salerno has performed, so the company is staging its productions to fit.

Salerno typically rehearses for six weeks, five nights a week. Because they had never performed *Oklahoma!* before, Salerno rehearsed this show for eight weeks.

"People have a life; making time for rehearsals can be difficult," says Capria. "But everyone is here when needed because they have a passion for doing this. For all of us, there's nothing we'd rather be doing." During breaks, instead of small talk, the performers give tips to each other. "I call it 360-degree coaching."

For Capria, the most exciting thing about rehearsals is watching the magic of theatre happen. "People go through



Jekyll and Hyde cast

a scene a couple of times, and then one day, the tension is there. Or the love. It's real. It comes alive."

Audiences feel this too. The most rewarding part of performing is the audience reaction. "We do this for the audience," says Capria. "We want to make a difference to them. If people tell me that a part was good, or that they've been touched, it's the absolute best thing for me."

The company is always prepared for anything going wrong — and something always does. "One of the worst disasters was when we were doing *Godspell*," notes Mike. "Two actors walked off the set 10 hours before opening night. The cast broke their rear ends that day to learn the lines and music, and the show turned out better than ever." For a performance of *Sweet Dreams*, the portable lighting blinked out. The company's lighting engineers did some on-the-fly substitutions, and the audience never noticed.

"That's show business — there's a reason they say that S.B. and B.S. are the same thing reversed!"

Evelyn Bless

**Salerno and ACC
2009-10 Schedule**
New productions for 2009-10:
Man of La Mancha
October 9-18, 2009
Broadway in Concert
November 27 - December 6, 2009
Little Women: The Musical
February 5-14, 2010
Hitsville, U.S.A.
April 9-18, 2010
There will be additional shows this summer; watch for announcements!

Salerno and American Concert Company

Salerno performs full length Broadway musical theatre. Past shows have included (among others): *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Jekyll and Hyde: the Musical*, *Grease* and *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*.

The company branched out in 2006 to form American Concert Company (ACC) so it could offer musical revues and entertainment for private events. These shows are typically much smaller in scope — one to four performers — and comprise musical medleys.

Before starting ACC, Mike Mathews and his family went to Las Vegas to research revue-style entertainment (not exactly a hardship tour, Mike admits). In four days, they saw six full-length Vegas

productions. "The trip took everything I knew about theatre and turned it on its head," says Mike. "I was coming from a place that was art-based, and this took me to an entertainment place." The insights went into new ACC shows and have also influenced Salerno.

Salerno and ACC are unusual in that they have negotiated permission to adapt the music of Andrew Lloyd Weber, Steve Schwartz, Frank Wildhorn, Rodgers and Hammerstein and Music Theatre International. "Adaptation is one stage beyond buying the use," notes Mike. "This gives us more creative opportunities."

ACC's first production, *Broadway in Concert*, was delivered at Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center for a private, black-tie party of 200. The troupe has recently written and produced *Sweet Dreams*, *Country Kings and Queens* and a one-man show, *An Evening with Bobby Darin*.

Derek Baxter, Craig Ruska, Michael Adams and Mike Mathews in Sweet Dreams



Playing Mind Games at the Center

Chess Club Starts

When asked, "What is chess?" the Caliph of Baghdad replied, "What is life?"

The Center is starting its own chess club. Known as the game of kings, chess is one of the oldest and most challenging games of strategy in the world. Chess develops your mental abilities. It's also a unique form of social play. In Eastern European towns, the chess club is often the center of community life — a combination family room, billiards hall and neighborhood bar.

Open to all ages and skill levels, the new chess club hopes to nurture chess skill among those who currently play, used to play or want to learn. The group will meet on Wednesday evenings. For more information, contact Victor Kormanik at 482-2252 or VictorKCii@aol.com.



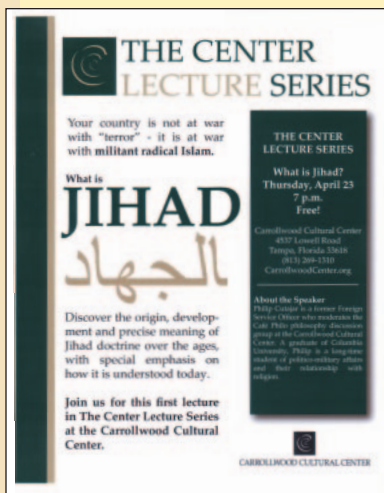
Jihad Lecture

The Center inaugurated its new Lecture Series on April 23 with "What is Jihad?" About 120 people attended the lecture, which explained the origin, history and meaning of the doctrine of jihad. The talk was followed by a spirited question and answer session.

The lecture was given by Philip Cutajar, a former Foreign Service officer who is a long-time student of politico-military affairs and their relationship with religion. Moderator of the Café Philo discussion group at the Center, Phil is a graduate of Columbia University and John Jay scholar.

The purpose of the Center Lecture Series is to present thought-provoking and interest-

ing topics to the community. The second talk in the Series will also be given by Phil, who will speak on "Thinking about the Universe."



Dear Mom and D



It's Friday, June 27, 2008.

On the Center stage 35 students, dressed in matching tee-shirts, finish "I Won't Grow Up" from *Peter Pan* to thunderous applause from parents, grandparents and friends. After the performance

students and families walk around the Center hand-in-hand, picking up artwork,

ceramic pieces and other mementos. The 2008 Summer Camp has just finished.

The 2008 camp was very much an experiment. Having opened its doors just four months earlier, the Center decided to offer a simple program that could be enhanced in future years. There was one camp that lasted two weeks. With a theme of "The Arts Never Looked So Neat," the camp included a rotating schedule where students participated in chorus, dance, piano, theatre, painting, printmaking and pottery each day.

As it turned out, the program proved to be more than just an experiment. No one imagined how many additional programs would be born in that first camp. Broadway Kids, the Center's new children's professional theatre company, was formed because of the young talent seen on stage that day. In addition, the Center decided to sprinkle more youth camps and workshops throughout the calendar year; for example, it offered Holiday Magic Workshops this past December.

The biggest change to come out of last year's camp,



Dad...Summer Camp is Great!

however, is this year's camp. Like any child, the program has grown up and is emerging as a bigger, more intricate, multifaceted version of itself. This summer, the camps last six weeks and include more than 22 programs for ages 2 to 16. Called "Shine with the Arts," they will run from June 8 through July 18. Most camps will last one week and focus on one of four areas:

- Movement & Performance
- Music
- Art
- Construction & Engineering

Children can mix and match areas; they can also specialize in one subject for up to six weeks.

The Construction and Engineering camps introduce two new Center activities: Paper Airplanes and Team Building Robotics. In Paper Airplanes 101 and 202, children will learn how to construct and trim paper airplanes using copier paper. In Team Building Robotics Mini Camp, the campers will work in teams to solve problems and compete in robotics challenges.

Other camps enhance some popular activities, such as Music & Art for Little Ones, Pottery/Multi-Media Art and Cartooning. The Broadway Kids Camp will give kids ages 8 to 13 the opportunity to learn staging, costuming, choreography and dialogue as they prepare to produce *Oliver!*

"It will be a fantastic summer of new and exciting camps," says Education Outreach Director Helen Michaelson, "No one in this area has anything similar to this curriculum. We tried very hard to present something unique, flexible and affordable."

Most camps are scheduled to run from 9 a.m. to noon or from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. In addition, the Center will run

an Early Morning Camp from 7:30 to 9 a.m. and an Extended Camp from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.

If this variety of activities doesn't sound stimulating enough, each week will also have a theme:

- Space: June 8 – 12
- Around the World: June 15 – 19
- Animals: June 22 – 26
- The Sea: June 29 – July 3
- Americana: July 6 – 10
- The Circus: July 13 – 17

"I wanted to add an extra element of fun and thought a weekly theme would help tie the individual camps together," says Helen. Camp projects will reflect the week's theme and children will be encouraged to dress up if desired. "It's especially fun for those students who will participate for multiple weeks."

The program was unveiled in March, giving families more time to plan this year. Executive Director Paul Berg comments, "Even though we've grown this year's program by four weeks and 20 activities, I think we will see a lot of the camps start to fill up."

According to Helen, some of the more popular camps are close to selling out now. "I've talked with a lot of parents and everyone is really excited to have such a comprehensive camp opportunity in this area."

If the success of the 2008 camp program is any indication, it's a sure bet the 2009 summer camps will have kids saying, "Please Mom and Dad, I want some more."

For more information and a complete camp schedule, call 269-1310, stop by to visit the Center or visit www.CarrollwoodCenter.org.

Adrienne Hutelmyer



Pictures at an Exhibition

Every time I enter a museum or art gallery, I cannot help but be struck by the contrasts on display. Painters have been trying to represent things for many centuries now, but as painting styles change, the basic subject categories remain the same. The portrait, the still-life, the abstract design, the world of nature — this is what eternally draws the artist's eye. With these subjects, however, the interpretation is entirely up to the painter. What we see on the canvas is not a literal representation; it is always the painter's individual commentary in color and form, offered for our consideration.

The Cultural Center's ever-changing exhibition of local artists has become a gallery, beckoning us to enter, look, and sample the perspectives on offer. After enjoying a leisurely cup of gourmet coffee at the new Melitta coffee station in the atrium, I find myself wandering by the pictures ranged along the walls. My lunch-hour stopover has unexpectedly become a tour of art.

The first work that demands my attention is a painting of a young woman. She stares at me proudly, directly. Nothing ambiguous about her character: her finely drawn features bespeak total confidence. She can surely handle...well, just about anything. An elegant, simple black dress and a jewel necklace proclaim wealth. In fact, take away her youthful perfection, the smoothness of her skin and the equanimity of her glance, and you would have a rich, elderly widow sitting in a sumptuous living room.

Could this be what the artist intended? Although our subject wears a mature woman's clothing, her eyes have never seen what an older person would have seen. She has not yet been wounded; she has not yet suffered a real loss. Yet there is a hint of resignation in her bearing. We are aware of a future as well as her present. If a painter is good at his profession, he will seek to capture this kind of essence and communicate it to us. A high-quality studio photograph would have been an exact representation of this person but I do not think it would have given me such a perceptible rendering of her soul.

A larger canvas comes into view, filled with shimmering, white tropical light. The thick oil brushstrokes stream from a palette of primary colors. I see a town by the sea, pulsating with motion, people and sound. The perspective — let's see, we're looking at this from above, so we are on a hill or some elevated point with leafy trees nearby. And

there are mountains or steep hills to the left. Looks like California or the Mediterranean coast of France or Italy in summer. It's high season, all right. The streets are jammed; the restaurants sport umbrellas of every hue; the beach is packed; the ocean offshore is a crowded playground of sails. Several boys are leaning on a wall close by, taking it all in.

This is one of those paintings that dissolves into abstract forms if you move too close. Tiny red or yellow oblong shapes only become recognizable as, say, cars or umbrellas if they are seen from a distance. It's reminiscent of some of the impressionist masterpieces. What's the technique and composition telling me? Is it a comment on the bustling, quicksilver energy of this time and place? Do I feel anything? And if not, does that mean this picture is simply a pretty postcard to me?

Time to switch gears. The Center does not group these pictures by genres, so you have to readjust as you shift your gaze to the next work. An

Several weeks ago, Ron Jacobson's colorful boxes and bottles were on display in the Center lobby. They evoke graffiti, postcards, old travel trunks and even children's lunch boxes. Painted with images and narrative fragments that sometimes follow and sometimes ignore the containers' contours, the pieces give us brief, intense glimpses into overheard lives.

unusual splash has caught my eye. The white of the canvas here can be seen only in random spots; the painting is dominated by violent, jagged spurts of every color you could imagine. This is certainly work in the mode of abstract

expressionism. Nothing but color, lines, drops, streaks. Nothing concrete; everything abstract.

Now I admit that I have little affection for this type of painting, just as I don't care for symbolist verse or cacophonous music. For me, an identifiable subject is a *sine qua non*; without it, I feel that I cannot fully appreciate the artist's commentary. Nevertheless, I am drawn into the dance of colors and lines here, enjoying the lively counterpoint. Pure abstraction can "work" for me if the artist is able to engage me in the relationships of color and form.

I suppose that this, in the broadest sense, is what draws me in. The venue may be the Metropolitan or the Louvre, a Sarasota gallery or the Carrollwood Cultural Center. The artist may be an Old Master, a pop favorite or an unknown. The principle remains the same. What is the artist saying to me? What is the unique view of reality in this work, represented through color and line? At its best, art shows me the world seen anew, through another person's eyes; and it conveys a unique and unified vision in every detail.

Philip Cutajar



Center Social Events

Wine Tasting Series

The Center will hold Taste & Teach wine classes on May 21, June 4, June 18, July 2 and July 16. Learn about wines of the world, etiquette, trivia, grape-producing regions and more. Hosted by Time for Wine and Ahern Insurance Services, proceeds from these classes benefit the Center. For details and to register, contact Charles Visalli at TimeForWine@tampabay.rr.com or call 813-664-1430.

The Culture of Travel

Discovering new places, including places you've been before, is one of the great joys of life. The Center is making travel easy for you by organizing group trips through AAA South. A small part of every ticket benefits the Center. The trips are:

Ringling Museum, Sarasota	June 6
Leu Gardens in Winter Park	August 9
Halloween Cruise to Mexico	October 29-31
Jackie Kennedy's Washington, D.C.	December 4-7

For information and reservations, contact Rich Adams at AAA: 963-2121 or radams@aaasouth.com. AAA will be at the May 18 social to provide more details about the trips.

Monday Magic Social Gatherings

The Center hosts a free social gathering for the community on the last Monday of each month. Coming up are:

May 18	Discover Florida and Beyond
June 29	Visit Tampa Bay
July 27	Lights! Camera! Action!

Don't Forget to Eat

The Center's "Dining Around the World" series continues during the summer. In May, June and July we will visit restaurants featuring the cuisines of Colombia, Japan and India. Contact dawn@CarrollwoodCenter.org for details.

Thanks to Center Supporters

We would like to thank the following individuals, families and organizations for their generous support. The Center is a Hillsborough County facility which must provide part of its own funding. All of you are vital to the Center's success!

Center Members

When you join the Center, you become a member of the Friends of the Carrollwood Cultural Center (FCCC), which is responsible for operating the Center. Our membership is currently at almost 700. Welcome to everyone!

Naming Rights Sponsors

The following organizations and individuals have sponsored a Center room or area:

- Carrollwood Village Homeowners' Association
- Melitta Coffee • Greenacre Property • The Miley Family

First Chairs

The individuals below have generously donated a plaque on a Center chair:

- Kent Linder • Tom Jones • John Miley • June Confare

Corporate Members

We would like to extend a special welcome to our corporate members. We greatly appreciate their community spirit.

Platinum: Sears Home Appliance Showroom

Silver: Edgar Jane, M.D.
Island Computer Services

Bronze: John A. Floralà, Ph.D.
Todd Weiner, D.D.S.
Woodroffe Corporate-Architects

Watch for these CCC Upcoming Events

Art in the Works

The North Tampa Artists' League will have its first annual Spring Membership Show, a judged and juried exhibit throughout the Center, in May and June. The Center's Faculty/Student Show will follow in June and July.

Hootenanny Fundraiser for the Center

Beer, wine and snacks will be available. Bring your friends and kids — it should be a hoot on May 29, 7:00 p.m.

"What are Friends For?"

With the theme "What are Friends For?", the Center will host a food drive for our local Food Pantry during the weekend of May 29-31. Bring non-perishable items to drop off.

Broadway Kids Step Out

Broadway Kids, the Center's professional children's theatre troupe, presents its first production, *Oliver!* in July.



An *Oliver!* rehearsal.

Centerpieces

Newsletter of the Carrollwood Cultural Center
Vol. 2 Issue 2

Centerpieces reports on activities, people, and issues associated with the Carrollwood Cultural Center. *Centerpieces* is published quarterly.

Letters to the editor and reader submissions are welcome. Please mail submissions to *Centerpieces*, Carrollwood Cultural Center, 4537 Lowell Road, Tampa, FL 33618. Include your name, address, evening phone number, and the date. *Centerpieces* may edit your submission or withhold publication.

Centerpieces is produced by volunteers of the Carrollwood Cultural Center. New staff members are welcome.

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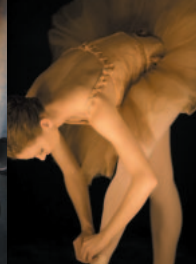
**Business
Facilities**



Classes



Concerts



Arts

Coming Performances

Hootenanny
May 29

**CCC Band / Chorus &
Broadway Kids**
May 30

Jazz with Jim
June 20, July 10

Oliver!
July 17, 18, 24, 25

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The Truth About GiGi

The entertainment at the Center's "Arts in the Park" on March 14 included a local band, The Truth About GiGi. This band is a family affair: it consists of Alex DeLeon on lead guitar and vocals, his twin sisters Zoe (bass and vocals) and Haley (keyboards and vocals), and his friend Jamie Dammers on drums. The group performed an eclectic mix of pop and alternative music, including covers of Tom Petty, Pat Benatar, Katy Perry, The Beatles, Weezer, Smash Mouth and Coldplay.

The band was glad to be a part of the Center's anniversary celebration. "I thought it was a great turnout, and great exposure for the Cultural Center," said Alex. "We play any kind of music, whatever people want to listen to, and here was a chance to play for a lot of different people in an outdoor setting. We wish there were more events like this one."

So what's the "truth about GiGi?" When Alex was a little boy, he and his mother played a game with a fictitious Gila monster. Alex could not pronounce "Gila," so he called it the "GiGi" monster. As he got older, the story became a family joke. He would always tell his mother that, one day, others would find out the truth about GiGi.

John Byrnes



Artist Darwin Leon draws a portrait.



Artist Peter Stilton and puppeteer Holly Rubin.