

# Encore!

 Diamond Head Theatre

March 2009  
Season 94 • Issue 2



## Three Friends, Two Parts and One Unique Play

### *A Story of Friendship and Dedication*

Artistic Director John Ramage attended the play *Souvenir* on Broadway in 2005 and, enthralled by the portrayal of Florence Foster Jenkins, immediately began to dream of the show's Hawaii premiere at DHT.

The show would require two exceptional and very talented individuals: a woman who could sing well enough to be able to sing badly and a man who was an actor, a singer *and* an accomplished pianist. John approached two longtime friends and veteran actors, Stefanie Smart and Laurence Paxton. Would they take it on? They would.

Rehearsals began in the fall of 2008. Stefanie, playing Mrs. Foster Jenkins, had to learn all the operas correctly in order to learn to sing them poorly. Larry, whose character, Cosme McMoon, never really leaves the stage, had mountains of dialogue to memorize. John had the formidable task

of making a two-person play fill Diamond Head Theatre's stage and captivate the audience as it had captivated him in New York.

There were long nights of just the three alone in a darkened theatre with only the stage lights lit. The holidays came and went. They barely noticed. Overtired, each came down with the inevitable cold or flu. Still, the rehearsals continued—afternoons, evenings, with tissues and cough syrup at the ready.

Opening night of *Souvenir*. The audience, not knowing what to expect, was caught off guard and unexpectedly moved to laughter and tears by the story of Madame Flo. The result: a funny, sweet, poignant show that thrilled audiences and critics alike.

Three friends, two parts and one unique play. A triumph! 

*P.S. In a bittersweet turn, Stefanie Smart took ill and was unable to complete the run of Souvenir. Another friend stepped in: Mary Chesnut Hicks. Still a triumph! Stefanie pursued the dream; Mary completed it.*

## Inside This Issue

A Look Back in Time	2
Executive Director's Message	2
Shooting Stars' Holiday Tour	3
Year in Review	4
'Ilima Awards	6
In the Spotlight	7
Welcome to Broadway!	8

## Coming Soon

GYPSY  
March 20-April 5, 2009

DIRTY ROTTEN  
SCOUNDRELS  
*A Hawaii Premiere*  
May 15-31, 2009

THE WEDDING SINGER  
*A Hawaii Premiere*  
July 10-26, 2009

## For Tickets

Call 808.733.0274 or visit  
[www.diamondheadtheatre.com](http://www.diamondheadtheatre.com)



## A Look Back in Time

### Annie Get Your Gun

*Annie Get Your Gun* opened at Honolulu Community Theatre June 18, 1982. The show was quite a hootin', hollerin', cowboy event, complete with country/Western music at intermission. What was remarkable about the show were all the familiar names, some of whom are still involved at HCT (now Diamond Head Theatre, or DHT).

Jim Demarest played one of the leads, Charlie Davenport. The playbill reads: "Kamaainas know him [Jim] well for his years as "Mr. Checkers" of KGMB's *Checkers and Pogo* show." Playing Buffalo Bill was another familiar name, Dave Donnelly. Dave, who passed away a few years ago, was a well-known columnist for the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. Interestingly enough, the playbill states he got his start as an actor, graduating from the University of Hawaii with a degree in drama. Another newsman, Jim Hackleman, was also in the cast. Jim was

a popular local sports reporter at the time. Honolulu artist Anne Irons played Mrs. Ferguson.

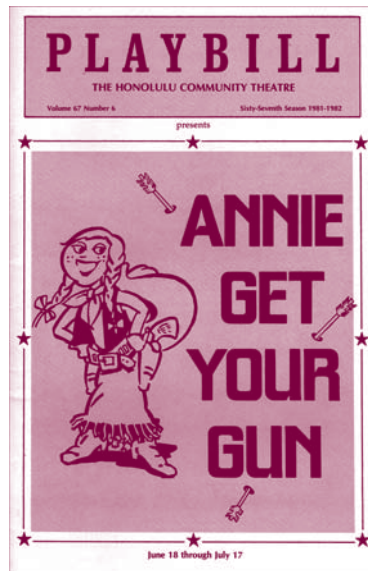
Some of the younger crowd in that show included 12-year-old Andrew Sakaguchi (now all grown up and a DHT actor/choreographer/director), who played Running Deer. Then-college student, Greg Zane (director of DHT's just-finished *Peter Pan*), played Whitefeather LaFong. The man you all see at the theatre, box office night manager Bob Todd, was *Annie's* musical director. Other names that may be familiar to you: Madeline Press as Annie and Bryan da Silva as Frank Butler. *Annie Get Your Gun* was directed and choreographed by Jim Hutchison, also a HCT/DHT long-timer.



Clockwise from left: Jim Demarest as Charlie Davenport; Phill Upton as Sitting Bull; and Bryan da Silva as Frank Butler

Ticket prices that year were \$5.50, \$7.75 and \$8.75; but before you say "roll back the prices," know that royalties were only \$365 a performance, versus the average show royalty of \$1,400 that we pay today. Hy's Steak House was an advertiser in the playbill, and a juicy New York steak was listed at \$12.50. Another advertiser, The Park Shore Hotel, featured rooms for \$44.

One of the best parts is that, more than 25 years later, many of the *Annie Get Your Gun* behind-the-scenes volunteers are still volunteering and/or involved at DHT—including the Gilberts, the Huffs, the Cundys, Lettie Pang, Paul Tremaine, Lawrence Ikezaki, Mary Marko and too many more to list. Now that's a legacy worth hootin' and hollerin' about! 🎭



## Executive Director's Message

There is no doubt we're facing a challenging year ahead. Every day we listen to news stories that concern, discourage or just plain frighten us. The headlines are bleak. The skies, even in our beautiful Hawaii, seem to be darkening.

At Diamond Head Theatre, we're working hard to bring you some bright spots amid all the gloom and doom.



We have some great shows coming up—shows that will not only entertain, but also give you another world to live in, somewhere else to be, even if only for one night. You'll be wowed by Shari Lynn as Mama Rose in the classic musical, *Gypsy*; you'll laugh out loud (really!) at the very hilarious *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*; and you'll be energized by the feel-good production of *The Wedding Singer*.

The Walt Disney Company has a mission statement that is very simple: "To make people happy." We'd like to borrow that. Walk into our cozy theatre. Take your seat. Find yourself surrounded by friends. Listen to the orchestra tune up. See the lights dim. Watch the curtain rise.

Let the show begin—the world outside can wait.

Let us make you happy.

See you at the theatre!

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## Our Mission Statement

Established in 1915, Diamond Head Theatre is the Broadway of the Pacific, producing the best live community theatre entertainment and advancing the theatre arts through education in Hawaii.

# Shooting Stars' Holiday Tour

DHT's Shooting Stars went "on tour" this past holiday season, with performances in a variety of locations. One of the things that DHT Stars Director John Rampage is most proud of is the Stars' adaptability to the different venues; so whether they performed on a small, makeshift stage in the Next Step Homeless Shelter or standing among couches and coffee tables at C.S. Wo, the kids danced and sang like the pros they have become!



C.S. Wo Customer Event: Home for the Holidays



Neiman Marcus, Breakfast with Santa



Smiling Stars backstage at The Honolulu Jaycees show at McKinley High School, with Stars Music Director Nanilisa Pascua



A private performance for Stars sponsor Joan Bellinger at the opening night of *Peter Pan*

# Diamond Head Theatre's 93rd Season

## The 2007–2008 Year in Review

### Our Season

Our season began with *Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*. The show featured songstress Anita Hall in her Diamond Head Theatre debut and turned out to be a delightful production. The competition of *The Lion King* across town had some effect on audience turnout, but even so, *Best Little Whorehouse* proved a popular vehicle to open our season. *Meet Me in St. Louis* followed—a heart-warming story of a family anticipating the World's Fair, complicated by the news they might be leaving their beloved hometown. All ended well, of course, and the show's famous tune, "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," never failed to put our audience in the holiday mood.

The holiday season also introduced a promotional season ticket package called Tinsel 'n Tickets. The package included two tickets to any three of the four remaining shows in the 2007–2008 season. It was the perfect gift for the holidays and sold well.

The new year brought Neil Simon's *Barefoot in the Park*. A stroll down memory lane for baby boomers who fondly recall the Robert Redford/Jane Fonda movie, *Barefoot* was a simply charming comedy about newlywed love and expectations. Directed by Rob Duval, it was a crowd pleaser. Then, the unexpected smash hit of the season followed: *Flower Drum Song*. DHT mounted the David Henry Hwang 2002 Broadway version, and the audiences simply loved it. Directed by Greg Zane and starring Autumn Ogawa as Mei Li, Brad Mezurashi as Wang Ta and Kathryn Lee as Linda Low, *Flower Drum Song* was filled with show-stopping production numbers ("Fan Tan Fannie") and sweet love songs ("Love Look Away"). The executive vice president of The Rodgers & Hammerstein Organization, Bert Fink, attended opening night, which was quite an honor for us.

Late spring brought a show that DHT audiences had been anticipating

all year: *The Producers*. Director (and DHT's artistic director) John Rampage pulled out all the stops for this show, and from costumes to set to sound to casting, it did not disappoint. Dennis Proulx and Don Nahaku perfectly captured the Bialystock and Bloom chemistry and left audiences begging for more. It was over the top as only Mel Brooks can be, and loads of fun.

The season concluded with the ever-popular *The Wizard of Oz*, which charmed children and adults alike all summer long. The theatre offered a "Dinner in the Emerald City" package, which, between matinees, introduced children attendees to the cast of characters, served them supper right up on the stage, plus lots more. It was the first time we'd done such a promotion, and both Saturdays sold out almost immediately.

### Education

Education continues to be a big part of our mission, and we're happy to report once again that our performing arts education program is flourishing. In season 2007–2008, nearly 1,000 children and adults took part in classes and workshops at Diamond Head Theatre ranging from baby ballet to hip hop to adult acting. Our full-year catalog continues to be in demand, giving potential students a visual picture of the year ahead, providing discounts for yearly enrollment and showcasing our very talented teaching staff.

Our Musical Theatre Experience summer school program also continues to thrive. As we've reported, the program is so popular that enrollment is now being staged to accommodate demand. MTE I ran for six weeks, then MTE II—a master class—followed it for two weeks. Combined attendance topped 100, and the sessions end with many smiling faces: children happy with their final performances and a summer full of new friendships, and parents happy with the growth and accomplishments of their children.



Best Little Whorehouse in Texas



Barefoot in the Park



Flower Drum Song



The Producers



The Wizard of Oz

4

Our Shooting Stars program continues to grow under the direction of DHT's artistic director, John Rampage. It was a busy year for the 45 children, who performed all over Oahu.

## Development

Raising money continues to be a necessary part of life at Diamond Head Theatre, as ticket sales covers only 42 percent of our costs. Our primary source of development revenue in 2007–2008 continued to be individual gifts via our membership and our annual holiday drive. One of the most successful elements of our individual gift campaign is The Producer's Club. At the end of fiscal year 2008, we had nearly 100 Producer's Club members all supporting Diamond Head Theatre and enjoying the fantastic benefits that come with membership. Our annual fundraising gala, *The Honolulu Advertiser's 'Ilima Awards*, took place on October 8, 2007, and raised \$197,000, or \$13,000 over anticipated revenue. The event turned out to be the swan song for our popular MC, Loretta Ables Sayre, who went from our 'Ilima Awards stage to Broadway for the starring role in the acclaimed *South Pacific*.

Our corporate show sponsorship program remains strong, contributing more than \$136,000. Diamond Head Theatre is lucky to have longtime and loyal corporate sponsors. We grew our Platinum Sponsor level in leaps and bounds (the \$10,000-level sponsorship gives sponsors, as a benefit, a night at the theatre all to themselves!), and secured five Platinum Sponsors for the 2007–2008 season.

## Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of Diamond Head Theatre. We simply could not operate without them—we count on our volunteers in literally every aspect of our theatre operations. We really cannot thank them enough, but we try in one small way by hosting an annual Volunteer Picnic, held this past season on August 15, 2008.

Several years ago, we moved the time of the event to late afternoon/early evening, and the beautiful sunset at the most recent picnic reaffirmed our decision to keep it an "evening affair."

The weather was just perfect as more than 200 volunteers arrived bearing beach mats and chairs and ready to picnic. Everyone ate, relaxed and chatted in DHT's gardens, then enjoyed terrific entertainment by Diamond Head Theatre's Shooting Stars. Interspersed between songs were the very popular door prize drawings. A great time was had by all.

Diamond Head Theatre is grateful to our newest new group of volunteers: The FriendRaisers. As we mentioned in a previous newsletter, last year the small but hardworking administrative staff at DHT found themselves simply overwhelmed with activities, events and promotions. We asked the parents of our youth performing troupe, The Shooting Stars, to form a group of volunteers similar to other organizations, which have booster clubs or guilds. Since that time, with many events and activities successfully implemented, Diamond Head Theatre is a changed place. In the eyes of the staff, year one has been a huge success—not only because of the help The Friends have provided, but even more importantly because of the sense of support and commitment generated. We're all a team, helping Diamond Head Theatre grow and flourish.

Finally, our volunteer roster would not be complete without mentioning our dedicated Board of Directors, volunteers all.

## New York Theatre Tours

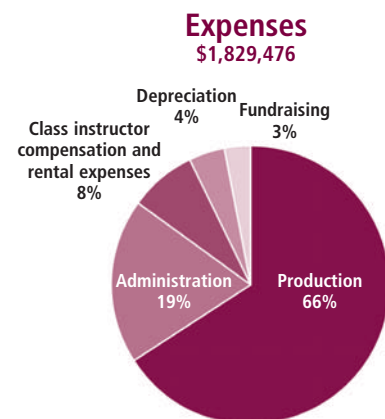
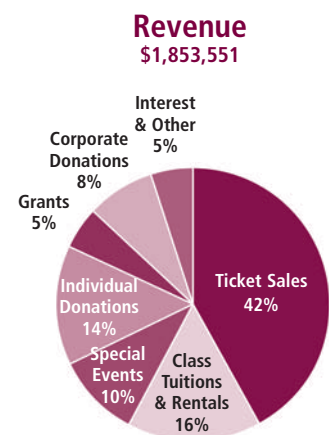
For several years now, Diamond Head Theatre has been providing a theatre tour to New York City every November. The tours enable us to introduce people to Broadway, plus provide Deena and John with an annual visit to view shows and do business. The tours also make a small, but important, contribution to our bottom line.

In the fall of 2007, we once again headed to Manhattan—and despite the stagehand strike on Broadway, the group had a fine time. We added a spring tour in May 2008, primarily to see *South Pacific*, which was a huge success. Tours are planned for November 2009 and, we hope, November 2010.

## Financial

Building DHT's budget is always challenging, and this year was no different.

Throughout the year, our financial picture changes—and along with it, some adjustments may need to be made. For the fiscal year ending August 31, 2008, DHT did well, wrapping up once again with a surplus, part of which we used to reward staff for their hard work; buy some much needed office equipment; and stock our scene shop and costume shop with inventory, tools and materials.



## The Facility

In 2007, Diamond Head Theatre commissioned a building assessment report to determine the future of our aging theatre building. Based on the findings of the report, the Board voted to embark upon an exploration of the feasibility of constructing a new theatre. Though all very preliminary, the steps taken over the next three to five years will set a course for the future of Diamond Head Theatre. 📍

# The Honolulu Advertiser's 2008 'Ilima Awards

The votes were in, the winners were named and it was time to party! Held on October 13, 2008, the 'Ilima Awards continue to be Diamond Head Theatre's signature and very popular fundraiser. This year, 21 winning restaurants provided delicious pupu; seven wine purveyors poured; martinis were shaken, not stirred; and happy patrons danced the night away to Kit Samson's group Sound Advice. A record \$200,000 was raised, money critical to support our productions and education programs. Mark your calendars for October 12, 2009—we've already sold two tables!



Title sponsor *Honolulu Advertiser's* publisher, Lee Webber, welcomes more than 500 patrons to *The Honolulu Advertiser's 'Ilima Awards*, a benefit for Diamond Head Theatre



The winner! A very pleased 'Ilima patron walks off with the grand prize: round trip tickets to New York City (thanks to Continental Airlines), accommodations at the Westin New York (thanks to Starwood Hotels & Resorts) and tickets for two to a Broadway show

6



DHT Board Director Paul deVille is all smiles, accompanied by friend Carol Fujie (on left) and wife Rebecca deVille (on right)



DHT Vice President/Secretary Rick Ching and wife Marybeth (top left) host their guests at the Servco Foundation Table



"We did it!" Some of the hard-working DHT staff pose as the event winds down



Producer Award winner Grant Sim, of Big G's Catering, celebrates his win!

# In the Spotlight

## How Four Local Theatre Folks Found Their Calling

Every actor, singer and dancer on every stage in the world has a story about how he or she was “bitten by the theatre bug.” For most of them it was that first magical excursion as a child to a live theatre performance, where the curtain lifted and a world of imagination began. But it wasn't just entertainment to them—it was an experience that shaped their lives.



DHT Artistic Director John Rampage asked four of our regulars to tell us how they found their way into the wonderful and challenging business of theatre, and he received answers both interesting and inspiring.

### Stefanie Smart

ACTRESS

My very first theatrical experience was when I was a young child. My parents took me to a theatrical production of *Wind in the*



*Willows*. I had no idea what a play was or what to expect. The house lights faded to black and the stage lights came up on all of these creatures. They were human beings, of course, but they weren't entirely human anymore—they were playing the roles of the main characters in one of my favorite bedtime stories. I marveled in my seat and strained to see the action beyond the silhouette of the adult sitting in front of me. It was like I couldn't get close enough. I felt as though a light went on inside me. I felt this happiness permeate my little body. I wanted—no, needed—to be there on stage with my friends from the book. It all looked like so much fun!

In retrospect, I think I just wanted to play. Later, as I matured, I was able to watch my grandfather “play” on the boards. After a few of his shows, I was finally able to connect strongly with the notion that it was possible for me to

be up there in the lights “playing,” and moving entire audiences to think and feel in the bargain.

### Meagan Olson

STAGE MANAGER

There are many “firsts” in our lives: first steps, first words. One of my best firsts was when I got to see a live musical. It was the moment that changed everything for me. While growing up I loved all the musicals that I'd seen on television, from *My Fair Lady* to *42nd Street*. It was and still is amazing to me how much emotion can come from song. Yes, I'm a musical junkie! I remember one year *A Chorus Line* came to Hawaii. My parents went to see the show, and I was so mad that they wouldn't take me. They said it was inappropriate for children!

Then several years later another show came to town: *Cats*. Yes, that was my first live Broadway show. We sat on the aisle and were fairly close to the front of the stage, and you know, the first time they brought *Cats* to Hawaii they did the show in the arena. The actors came right down the aisles. I can't remember how old I was, maybe 15 or 16, but it was at that moment I knew I had to be a part of this magical world.

### Greg Zane

DIRECTOR AND CHOREOGRAPHER

Growing up I was always fascinated with movie musicals. I loved the singing, the dancing and the movie stars.

One of my first theatre memories was seeing a touring company of *The Sound of Music* at the Blaisdell Concert Hall. As I sat watching the live performance I kept thinking, “Where's Julie Andrews? Where are the Alps? Why are the songs in the wrong order? What's going on here? This is not *The Sound of Music*!” Needless to say, I was not impressed with theatre. That is, until 1979.



That year, I was dragged to a professional production of *A Chorus Line*. I was blown away by the theatricality of the live performance. The storytelling through song and dance was seamless and the excitement was palpable. I hung on every word, every lyric, every dance step. I knew I had to be a part of that world. I needed to be a part of the theatre. I needed to be a dancer. Little did I know that two performers in that production would later figure so prominently in my life: John Rampage and Tommy Aguilar would become friends and help me realize my dream as a performer. All that I've accomplished in my theatrical life comes from seeing that performance of *A Chorus Line*.

### Camille Michel

ACTRESS

I performed in my first musical *before* the performing bug really bit. Urged by our ballet teacher to audition, my sisters and I were cast in HCT's *The King and I* when I was 10.

I was in middle school when the musical bug finally made its way to where my Navy family was stationed overseas. In our living room in Tokyo, my sisters and I discovered *Annie* through the Broadway cast album. We'd never seen the show, so we learned all the songs and staged our own. It seems like such a cliché to have had my first “I want to do that!” moment while belting out “Tomorrow”—but I “bet yer bottom dollar” there are a gazillion little girls (and grown-up girls like me) for whom that's true.

Nearly 30 years later, my youngest daughter was cast in a local production of *Annie*. Helping her learn “It's the Hard-Knock Life” for the audition was like coming home to a place in my heart I hadn't visited in a long time. By then, I'd done a handful of musicals throughout high school and college. After a 15-year break to get married and have three children, I was lucky enough to find my way back to the stage in the ensemble of my little girl's very first show. 📺



## Welcome to Broadway!

Each year DHT takes interested patrons to the Big Apple. For some, it's the first time to New York—for others, it's their fifth consecutive tour! The sights and sounds never fail to delight: The weather is crisp and the city is bustling. Last fall we took in *South Pacific*, *Billy Elliot* and a third show folks picked for themselves, such as *Wicked*, *Radio City Christmas Spectacular*, *Jersey Boys*, *Gypsy*, *Mary Poppins* and many more. Broadway Bound 2009 kicks off November 11. Call 733-0277 x301 for details.



**Radio City Tour with the requisite Rockette!**  
From left: Francine Gedan, tour guide and DHT alum Michelle Baltazar, Judy Muncaster, John Rampage and Diane VanderZanden



**One of the very special highlights: visiting with Loretta Ables Sayre, who stars as Bloody Mary in Broadway's *South Pacific***



**Dinner at the Four Seasons. Top, from left: Cynthia Yamagata, Jane Hashimoto, Esther Nakano, Sharon Inamine and Karen Saiki. Bottom, from left: General and Mrs. Cecil Ryder, and Sharon Sakauye**



**Taking on the New York subway!** From left: Phyllis Butler, Sachi Taketa and Helen Iwatani

**The weather was perfect for a spin around Central Park.** From left: Ann Geschwandter, Bill Gray, and Carol and Roy Takamoto

