the Community Players of Concord, NH

Our 97th Season

Children's Theatre Project

Charlotte's Web

Adapted by Joseph Robinette

Based on the book by E.B. White

October 18–19, 2024



November 22–24, 2024

Ken Ludwig's

THE GODS OF COMEDY

February 14–16, 2025

OUR TOWN



BY THORNTON WILDER

May 2–4, 2025

Season Presenting Sponsor



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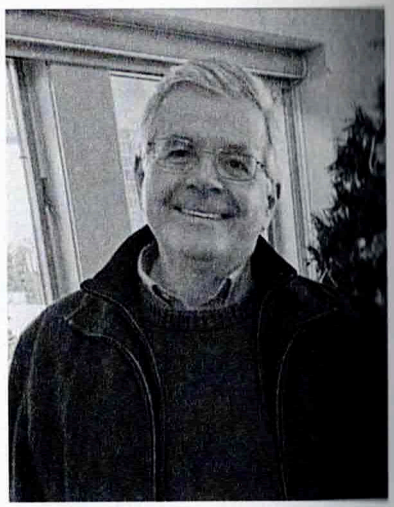
the Community Players of Concord, NH



A message from Community Players President

Jim Webber

So much of our lives is spent scrolling these days, we're bound to come across something worthwhile now and then. One of my recent favorites isn't quite Mark Twain, but I'll let you be the judge: "Volunteers are not paid because they have no worth, but because they are priceless." That works for me, and speaks volumes about the Community Players. Our volunteers that you see onstage play dozens of roles, and our volunteers that you don't see offstage play dozens of roles as well. I'm not going to list their roles here, but suffice it to say that volunteers have become so important to us that we have a new committee devoted to new volunteer involvement to make sure new folks have someone to guide them into the organization and get them set up in activities that fit their interests, goals, availability, and lifestyle.

Keeping up our end of the bargain with our volunteers is very important to us. To keep our Players safe, we're developing new training and policies for working at our wonderful Players Studio on Concord Heights. We want to be sure that while volunteers provide the creativity, we create a safe environment for Players of all ages.

Developing and expanding the skills of volunteers has also become a theme of late; in recent months, we've had workshops in singing, producing, stage-managing, and we're even presenting a free workshop production near the end of October (the ad is in this program!). Acting workshops with a focus on diction and performing Shakespeare are in the planning stages for 2025.

You can see how important our volunteers are to us. Even our stage directors carefully plot out their rehearsal schedules to utilize actors' valuable time efficiently. Players are volunteers. And volunteers are priceless.

If you're interested in working with the Community Players, please contact Cindy Dickinson at cdcarolinablue@gmail.com.

Enjoy the show!

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the Community Players of Concord, NH presents



Ken Ludwig's

THE GODS OF COMEDY



Play by KEN LUDWIG
Directed by ELIZABETH LENT

February 14, 15, and 16, 2025

Producers
Allwynne Fine
Elizabeth Lent
Colleen Schwarz
Douglas Schwarz
Mary Walker

Costume Design
Gay Bean
Suzanne Potoma

Choreographer
Beth Fenske

Set Design
Craig Walker

Props
Linda Chadbourne
Kendra West-Senor

Sound Effects
Erik Hodges

Special Effects
Wallace Pineault

Lighting Design
Steven Meier

Sound
Wilbur Morrisette

Season Presenting Sponsor
MERRIMACK COUNTY SAVINGS BANK

Show sponsor
Orr&Reno

Gods of Comedy is presented in arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc.
www.concordtheatricals.com

Cast of Characters

[In Order of Appearance]

Aristide.....Dana Sackos
Daphne Rain.....Emilee Thompson
Dean Trickett.....Donna Julian
Ralph.....Alex Hunton
Zoe.....Jeri Lynn Owen
Aleksi.....Griffin Stuart
Dionysus.....Kaj Hache
Thalia.....Suzanne Watts
Brooklyn DeWolfe.....Heather Carmichael
Ares.....Seth Bunke

Production Staff

Director/Producer.....Elizabeth Lent
Producers.....Allwynne Fine, Colleen Schwarz, Douglas Schwarz, Mary Walker
Stage Manager.....Kathryn Hodges
Asst. Stage Manager/Sound Effects.....Erik Hodges
Set Design.....Craig Walker
Lighting Design.....Steven Meier
Lighting Assistance.....Harper Annicchiarico, Wallace Pineault
Lead Builder.....Rick Silverberg
Asst. Builders.....Eiligh Fenske, Kimball Fenske, Liza Poinier, William Potter, Craig Walker
Scenic Artists.....Kristin Desmarais, Cynthia Dickinson, Jazmine Jade, JoAnn Martin, Debbie Ouellette
Painting.....Ashley Dole, Kaj Hache, Donna Julian, Jeri Lynn Owen, Emilee Thompson, Mary Walker, Suzanne Watts
Set Dressing.....Jenifer Ackerman
Costume Design.....Gay Bean, Suzanne Potoma
Props Design.....Linda Chadbourne, Kendra West-Senor
Sound.....Wilbur Morrissette
Sound Consultant.....Wayland Bunnell
Choreography.....Beth Fenske
Special Effects.....Wallace Pineault
Production Assistant.....Karen Braz
Assistant to Stage Managers.....Ina Nakuci
Backstage Crew.....Karen Braz, Eiligh Fenske, Cary Gladstone, Geri Veroneau
Poster Design.....Douglas Schwarz
Season Program.....Anna Glover
Photographer.....Michael von Redlich

Theatre Staff

Box Office/Subscriptions.....Jim Webber
Box Office.....Kristin Curren , Mary Walker, Marika Yakubovich
House Managers.....Allwynne Fine, Elissa Hewitt Smith, Chris Smith
Ushers.....Friends of the Audi and Players members
Hospitality.....Friends of the Audi Cookie Bakers

Cast

Seth Bunke (Ares) Seth is back by popular demand! Central Northwest Boscawen's third finest actor, with a fan base approaching 20 people, is happy to take a break from his daily duties of danger and daring do, to return to the stage for the fourth time! He sends his love and thanks to his amazing son Airman 1st Class Alex, his sainted mother, his darling & beloved Tammy, the redoubtable & incomparable Kalista, and all his family and friends (you know who you are! Especially you two, Scarlett & Gemma!).

Heather Carmichael (Brooklyn De Wolfe) Heather is happy to be back on stage with The Players, after playing Cherry-Tracy in *Last Gas* nearly three years ago. When she's not working in an elementary school or running her extremely active two middle-school-aged children around, she's walking her dog, playing her electric bass, hiking in the mountains, or solving an elaborate corn maze. She thanks her family for encouraging her to create.

Kaj Hache (Dionysus) Kaj is thrilled to be coming back to theater after a two-year run when he returned to school to get super intelligent. Unfortunately, it didn't work. He began working with The Players in their 95th season and is returning for his third role. He really loves the close-knit family of this theatrical troupe. When not pretending to be a god, he works in drug and alcohol rehab.

Alex Hunton (Ralph Sargent) Alex is overjoyed to be making a return to The Players in this delightful production. Though he has appeared in many musicals over the years, this will be his first non-musical stage appearance, and he's glad it can be with such a fantastic cast and crew! Alex works as a high school music and theatre teacher during the school year and is also the executive director of the Derryfield Repertory Theatre. Thank you to everyone who has come out to support community theatre in New Hampshire!

Donna Julian (Dean Trickett) Donna is delighted to tackle an erudite character whose passion for history and ancient Greece is matched only by her own almost total ignorance of the subject. Thanks to Betty and a great cast. Love always to her wonderful, patient, and supportive husband. And shout out to Catherine, always being ready on the other end of the phone.

Jeri Lynn Owen (Zoe) Chasing dreams and new beginnings, this is a first for Jeri Lynn, who plays the role of Zoe. She recently moved back to the area, starting over in many ways; she is a new nurse and believes laughter and community are both good medicines. She enjoys music, reading, writing, and being surrounded by nature, no matter the season.

Dana Sackos (Aristide) Dana is very happy to be joining this fun and talented cast as a mere mortal without having to grow sideburns or a mustache. He recently played Mr. Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice*. He enjoys golf, hiking, and time on or near the water with friends and family. He thanks his friends and especially his boys for supporting his theatrical endeavors.

Griffin Stuart (Aleksi) Griffin was previously seen in The Players' productions of *Murder on the Orient Express* as MacQueen and *Barefoot in the Park* as Paul Bratter. Griffin is excited to embark on this new godly journey with friends old and new! He'd like to thank his friends and family for their love and support!

Emilee Thompson (Daphne Rain) After four years, Emilee finally returns to the stage for the first production in NH of *The Gods of Comedy*. Last seen as Gwendolyn Fairfax in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Cue Zero Theater), a Wickersham Brother in *Seussical* (Prescott Park Arts Festival), and in many performances at the Palace Theatre, including Sheila in *A Chorus Line* and Paulette in *Legally Blonde* (Palace Teen Company), she is overjoyed to flex her theatrical muscles again! Thanks to Elizabeth for the opportunity to be at play in a Ken Ludwig comedy, thanks to the cast for making The Players feel like home, and thanks to friends & family for their immense love & ardent support!!

Suzanne Watts (Thalia) Suzanne is thrilled to be back for her fourth show with The Players! In her spare time, she can be found doing hot yoga, eating her vegetables, and begging for attention from her cats. She'd like to thank everyone who donated their time and resources to make this show possible!

Staff

Elizabeth Lent (Director/Co-Producer) Betty is a long-time main stage director for the Community Players of Concord, most recently directing *The Bald Soprano* and *Murder on the Orient Express*. She is an Osy Strong Award Recipient, a Life Member, a Past President, and currently serves as The Players' Wardrobe Mistress. Throughout her career, she has directed scores of productions in secondary and community theatre settings.

Erik Peter Hodges (ASM; Sound Effects) Erik is celebrating his 60th year with The Players' family. His onstage roles include Harold Hill, Emile DeBeque, The Baker, and The Pirate King to name a few. His favorite role is as husband to Kathryn and father to Harper and Tess. Today he will be backstage playing sound cues and chasing actors who are not where they're supposed to be.

Kathryn GM Hodges (Stage Manager) Kathryn joined The Players in 1978 (47 years ago) in *On A Clear Day*. Since then, she has served on the Board and on many committees (currently co-Historian), tread the boards, and worked backstage, all with the support of her darling Erik and their "kids" Harper and Tess. She thanks Betty for asking her back to help.

Steven Meier (Lighting Design & Light Board Operator) Steven has been working with the Community Players since 2001. He has been working with Karen Braz and the Children's Theatre Project (CTP) since 2005 as lighting designer and board operator and has co-produced more than ten CTP productions. Steven has done lighting design for numerous mainstage productions as well. He is thrilled to be working with Betty Lent once again.

Suzanne Potoma (Wardrobe Design) Prepare yourselves for the roaring voice of *The Gods of Comedy*! Suzanne is proud to be part of this delightful farce by Ken Ludwig.

Rick Silverberg (Master Builder) Rick loves to teach others how to use power tools while building sets. and has been doing so for 50 years. He comes back to build year after year for The Players because he loves to make big boards into little boards.

Craig Walker (Set Design & Building) Craig started with The Players in fall 1985 working backstage on *The Music Man*. Coincidentally, that is when he met his wife of 35 years, who also coincidentally, is a co-producer on this show. Craig's design and build credits include *Witness for the Prosecution*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, and *Titanic*. He is a double recipient of Special Judges' awards from the NH Community Theatre Association for Set Design.

Mary Walker (Co-Producer) Mary has been a member of The Players since 1985, playing many roles both on and off stage. Along with her talented husband Craig, she is a recipient of the Osy Strong Award and is a Lifetime Member. She is very happy to join the great team on this fun show.

Kendra West-Senor (Props) Kendra joined The Players family in 1981, performing in *Gypsy* as Electra. Since then, she has been on and off stage, particularly as the Prop "Goddess", so of course this show piqued her interest. She needs some laughs and a reason to leave her house during the winter, so it's all good with this funny show. Sit back and have some giggles, on The Players...thanks for coming.

Special Thanks

ConcordTV, Glenna Considine, Karen Coyne, Bill Hanson, David Lent

Apologies to anyone inadvertently omitted from the program due to our printing deadline. We value your contribution. Many thanks to all.

Author's Note

[July 24, 2020 Thoughts on comedy]

The Gods of Comedy is dear to my heart for a number of reasons.

As a student, I was insufferably academic. I was drawn to literature, music and art the way a bee is drawn to honey, and no matter what other disciplines I explored, the attraction to the arts was undeniable. It was part of my DNA. From age 8 onwards, I read everything I could lay my hands on; I studied music incessantly (I became, and remain, an enormous fan of Italian bel canto opera); I tried sculpture until I realized I wasn't very good at it; I read thousands of plays (knowing from an early age that I wanted to go into the theater); and by age 15, Homer's The Odyssey was my favorite book.

What could better ignite a young scholar's love of literature than the works of Homer? The literary critic Northrop Frye says that all scholars are either Iliad critics or Odyssey critics, depending on their predisposition to tragedy or comedy. I was always drawn more to The Odyssey thanks to an inborn love of comedy that I still can't explain.

Looking back, it would have been grand to have been a Classics major in college and learned to read ancient Greek so that I would now have a shot at reading The Odyssey in the original. As it worked out, I double-majored in English Literature and Music Theory; but in my Junior year I took a course in Greek Literature in Translation from the great Classics scholar Richmond Lattimore. At that time, Lattimore's translations of Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were the standard texts for ancient Greek literature in the English-speaking world.

(Once, as a Junior, I had the temerity of inviting Lattimore to a play I'd written for Class Nite—the night of bacchanalian revelry where each class wrote and produced a play lampooning the faculty. Mine involved a Mexican village, a whorehouse and a church, and by the end of the evening, the shy and self-effacing Professor Lattimore was rolling his eyes and looking at me as though I was insane.)

Fast forward 25 years, and I was sitting in my study thinking about what to write next, when I turned and picked up the wonderful new translation of The Odyssey by Emily Wilson. First I read the terrific Introduction and Translator's Note. Then I continued to the text itself, and within 100 lines, I was reading this:

> With that, [Athena] tied her sandals on her feet,
> The marvelous golden sandals that she wears
> To travel sea and land, as fast as wind.
> She took the heavy bronze-tipped spear she uses
> to tame the ranks of the warriors with whom
> she is enraged. Then from the mountain down
> she sped to Ithaca, and stopped outside
> Odysseus' court, bronze spear in hand.
> She looked like Mentes now, the Taphian leader,
> a guest-friend.

Within a few more lines, Athena, in her disguise as Mentes, meets Telemachus, Odysseus' son, and Telemachus says

> "Good evening, stranger, and welcome.
> Be our guest, come and share our dinner,
> and then tell us what you need."

And suddenly it struck me that here, in the ways of the Greek gods, was the kernel of a stage comedy.

To the ancients Greeks (at least as represented in their literature), the gods were always among us. The gods were not ghosts, visiting us from the past. And they didn't live in the skies or in some ethereal or psychological world that we couldn't see and feel. Greek gods were a bit like the heroes in the Marvel Universe. They lived nearby in different neighborhoods, and they joined us in our adventures at their will.

In the case of the gods of ancient Greece, they lived in a specific place: on Mount Olympus, which is a real geographical location on mainland Greece near Thessalonica. They kept an eye on our comings and goings; and whenever they felt the need or the desire, they stepped down off their mountain and mingled among us. We see this behavior in the early lines of The Odyssey that I just quoted, where Athena disguises herself as Mentes and joins Telemachus at his home in Ithaca. And we see it again and again throughout the two Homeric epics, then in Catullus and a myriad of other Greek sources.

So what struck me that day was the idea of writing a comedy set in the present where the gods of Olympus come down from their mountain to help a mortal who is in trouble. In the end, I named her Daphne and decided that she was having trouble with her career and her heart at the same time.

As the plot thickened, she became a Classics scholar who had just returned from a summer in Greece. And, being a Classics scholar, she calls on the gods of ancient Greece to help her in her troubled state, and lo and behold, they walk in the door. The trouble is that the two particular gods who come to help her are Dionysus and Thalia, the gods of Comedy. And being the gods of Comedy, as opposed to the gods of Wisdom or Tragedy, every time they try to help her, they manage to make matters worse. They just keep tripping over themselves despite their good intentions.

What struck me then and continues to nag at me whenever I think about the history of comedy (which is most of my waking hours, I'm ashamed to say) is why aren't more plays written about gods and other supernatural beings? What better place could there be than the theater to represent the extra-normal? Think of A Midsummer Night's Dream, where Shakespeare creates an entire fairy kingdom, and where Oberon, the King of the Fairies has merely to say "I am invisible," and he becomes invisible right in front of us. Then, just two lines later, when other characters walk onstage and don't see him, he creates theater magic by being there (to the audience) and not being there (to the other players onstage) at the same time. Only in the theater could this stroke of genius be so effective.

I was also attracted by the idea of writing a play set in the modern world of Classical Literature as a kind of farce, because that's how comedy, at least in Western Literature, got its start. The first comic playwright in Western history was a Greek named Aristophanes, but his comic political surrealism never really caught on after his death in 386 BC. Two hundred years later came the first truly great comic playwright, Titus Maccius Plautus, a Roman who wrote in Latin, who more or less created dramatic comedy as we know it.

When we read Plautus, and certainly when we see him in production, we realize that his plays, though highly sophisticated, aren't primarily psychological studies of dramatic types, or implied comedies with roots in tragedy whose inheritor is Chekhov. Primarily, they're farces, filled with mistaken identity, old men longing for young women, young sons wanting to escape their parents, knockabout drubbings, verbal complications, pirates, courtesans and lots of sex. It is no coincidence that early in his career, Shakespeare adapted one of Plautus's comedies, Menaechmi, and called it The Comedy of Errors.

This is all to say that in developing the idea of having two Greek gods come down to visit a modern-day mortal, it seemed entirely appropriate to set this comedy in the Classics Department of a liberal arts college where other-worldly hijinks felt especially natural.

I only hope that this play is a small but worthy addition to the tradition of stage comedies with other-worldly concerns like Amphitryon, Blithe Spirit, and Visit to a Small Planet, where visits from gods, ghosts and extraterrestrials adds to the likelihood of onstage joy.

—Ken Ludwig

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