

PROLOGUE

News from Mohonk Mountain Stage Company

April 2004, Vol. #9 Issue #4

Robert G. Miller, Producing Director

Our Ninth Year!

FROM THE PRODUCER...



In our continuing effort to preserve and elevate the moral tone of our programs, and in support of our government's courageous election year effort to crack down on indecency, we are pleased to announce the "Responsible Orality Initiative," named in honor of our heroes at radio giant Clear Channel Communications, whose "Responsible Broadcast Initiative" was instituted just in time for the congressional hearings on indecency in the media.

Not content to be simply active in our attempts to safeguard our valued audience, we have decided to be **pro-active**. If need be, we are willing to kick it up a notch and become **super-duper-pro-active**.

First, all future programs will be presented on a ten-second delay. Audience members will be provided with earphones through which they will hear the evening's readings after we have bleeped out any unanticipated expletives that might occur when a reader's pages get mixed up or lost. The one glitch in this system is that it will not provide protection against "costume malfunctions" during performances, such as a reader's pants "accidentally" falling off, or the breaking loose of a heretofore-restrained body part.

As a second safeguard, we have begun actually *reading* our material before we present it, to avoid any embarrassing surprises. This will allow us to "refine" questionable passages before they reach your sensitive ears. There are some

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COLD BUFFET II: MMSC's Audience & Actor Challenge Night Saturday, April 3 at 8 PM

St. Andrew's Church
Main Street, New Paltz
Admission \$7



Those of you who made it to the first **COLD BUFFET** last November remember well the laughter and high-energy hijinks of our Audience and Actor Challenge. We had so much fun (and you've told us you did, too), that we're demanding a re-match, to see if our sharp, well-read audience members can stump our Readers Theatre stars in another evening of sometimes hilarious, sometimes poignant cold readings.

COLD BUFFET II is Mohonk Mountain Stage Company's feast-for-the-ears combination of *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*, *Antiques Roadshow* and *Fear Factor*. Based on the well-known "actor's nightmare," where an actor is thrust out on the stage without knowing what play he or she is in, **COLD BUFFET II** dares its finest fearless readers to interpret "cold" readings provided by the audience, with no opportunity to look over the text ahead of time. The motto for the evening is: you bring it, we'll read it!

Our audience members are invited to bring with them their favorite selections to be read aloud — whether poetry or prose, rib-tickling or heart-breaking, technical text or tongue-twisting tales. The actors will be handed their readings just before they are to be performed, and the fun begins! There are a few restrictions: no individual piece can take longer than 5 minutes to read, and no pieces in foreign or made-up languages are allowed. If selections involve more than one reader, audience members are encouraged to bring multiple copies of the text. We'll have a special table set up where you can give us your "contributions" to the buffet, and our *Chef par excellence*, Christine Crawfis, will concoct the delicious auditory "menu" from soup to nuts.

Favorite moments from last fall's **COLD BUFFET** included Bruce Pileggi and Richard Cattabiani reading Abbott and Costello's famous "Who's On First?," Ron Schade giving a dramatic reading of "Persistent Coughing" from the *Home Medical Encyclopedia*, and Don Wildy tripping

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**Close Range:
Wyoming Stories
by Annie Proulx**

Sat., April 24, 2004 at 8 PM

St. Andrew's Church,

Main Street in New Paltz

Admission \$7

*Produced by The Snakeland
Players, a subgroup of MMSC*



Written by Ron Schade, The Snakeland Players

First, we have to clear up one thing. While the author of these stories is Annie Proulx, the stories being read are from a collection entitled *Close Range*. They are not, as had been stated in former issues of *Prologue*, from her earlier collection, *Heart Songs*. If any of you are fans of *Heart Songs* and were specifically looking forward to hearing some stories from it, we apologize. *Heart Songs* does have some pretty darned good stories in it, so we would be glad to set up a reading from it at a future date if anyone's interested. Just let us know.

The stories we will be reading are *The Bunchgrass Edge of the World* and *Brokeback Mountain*. *The Bunchgrass Edge of the World* tells the story of a family whose members are shaped and defined by the immensity and isolation of their hardscrabble ranch, a story that hangs on the notion that hell hath no fury like a tractor scorned. In *Brokeback Mountain* two cowboys find themselves caught in a passion that they cannot explain, accept or escape from, but that is strong enough to endure everything except the world's violent intolerance. We are only reading two stories because they are a little on the longish side. Don't worry, though, there will be a nice comfortable intermission between the two stories.

Annie Proulx, as you are aware if you have ever read her work, is one of America's finest contemporary authors. Her best-known novel, *The Shipping News*, won a Pulitzer Prize, The National Book Award, and was made into an absolutely atrocious movie. She was the first woman to win a PEN/Faulkner Award (for her first novel, *Postcards*). Four of the stories in *Close Range*, including *The Bunchgrass Edge of the World*, appeared in various issues of the prestigious annual collection, *Best American Short Stories*. *Brokeback Mountain* won a National Magazine Award and an O'Henry Award. While *The Bunchgrass Edge of the World* is no slouch, *Brokeback Mountain* has got to be one of the best short stories we have ever read. Director Ang Lee (*The Ice Storm*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Crouching Tiger...*) must feel the same way. Rumor has it that he is working on a movie adaptation of it.

Annie Proulx is a writer who can create a landscape with a single line that is so real you can step into it, smell

the air and feel the sun on your shoulders. Her equally real characters are usually down-to-earth country folk who wouldn't know a latte from a laptop. This doesn't mean they are in any way simple, however. They are fully developed, well-rounded individuals, usually with more than their share of quirks and idiosyncrasies. This quirkiness extends all the way to their names, like Flyby Amendinger, for example. Or how about Car Scrope or Diamond Felts? Definitely names to be conjured with, or names with which to conjure, which is exactly what Proulx does. She conjures up wonderful stories around these characters, stories about ordinary people who do extraordinary things—always for logical reasons, although sometimes those reasons seem to defy logic.

Here's how Proulx describes the way she works. "For me, the strongest influences are the varied landscapes and bare ground of the hinterlands, rough weather and rural people living lives in the pincers of damaging isolation, ingrained localisms and the economic decisions made by distant urban powers. The rush, for me, comes from the effort to put these lives on paper, and through them examine the society that draws the lines."

If Annie Proulx has a credo as a writer, it is best expressed in this quote from a 1997 *Atlantic Monthly* interview. "Imagination is the human mind's central life strategy. It is how we anticipate danger, pleasure, threat. The imagination is how our expectations are raised and formulated; it excites and ennobles our purpose in life. The imagination blocks out hunger, bodily harm, bad luck, injury, loneliness, insult, the condition of the marooned person or the orphan, grief and disappointment, restlessness, desperation, imprisonment, and approaching death. And from the imagination spring the ideas, the actions, and the beliefs that we hold... It is everything. Imagination is the central pivot of human life." Or as the retired Wyoming rancher she quotes in the epigraph to *Close Range* says, "Reality's never been of much use out here."

The Snakeland Players who will be reading Annie Proulx's stories are Ron and Barbara Schade. Admission is \$7 and curtain is at 8:00 PM. St. Andrew's Church is located at 163 Main Street in New Paltz.

Cold Buffet II (*continued from pg. 1, col. 2*)

through the twisted text of *Fox In Socks*. Who knows what daring, delightful morsels will be set before our intrepid actors this time?

Readers volunteering to be "served up" at **COLD BUFFET II** include: Barbara Adams, Guy Anthony, Laurence Carr, William Connors, Christine Cawfis, Sean Marrinan, Bruce Pileggi, Ron Schade and Don Wildy.

St. Andrew's Church is located at 163 Main Street in New Paltz, NY. For reservations or information, please call 255-3102.

MMSC Sets Sail for Exciting New Territories

In April, MMSC will celebrate two landmark events in our history: the launch of our official website at www.mmstageco.com, and the publication of our first **Vanguard Voices of the Hudson Valley** journal. We'll be planning an official "launch party" sometime in April, and we hope you'll join us to toast these achievements and meet some of the key people involved.

Our website was designed with the invaluable assistance of Jared Pereira. Jared devoted countless hours setting up the basic design for the website and has fielded numerous frantic e-mails and phone calls from MMSC's web mavens, Christine Crawfis and Nan Alderson, as they wrote text, placed images, and explored terra incognita in hyperspace. We hope you'll take some time to visit the new website once it's "live," enjoy the wealth of information it offers, and return to it frequently for the latest about MMSC's productions, publications, performers and events.

We're excited about the publication of our **Vanguard Voices of the Hudson Valley** journal, the first of MMSC's semi-annual publishing efforts. This inaugural issue includes the texts of the six new plays we workshopped and presented last November in our "Vanguard Voices Project," plus insightful comments from Producing Director Robert G. Miller, Dramaturg Laurence Carr, and Actor William Connors

Our next journal, slated for publication this fall, will be a collection of original poetry written by poets residing in the Hudson Valley. If you're interested in submitting an original poem for our Poetry Journal, you can visit our website once it's "live" (see above) and click on "Publications" and then "Journals" to read the submission guidelines. The deadline for poetry submissions for the fall journal is August 15, 2004.

From the Producer *(cont. from pg. 1, col. 1)*

positive benefits to this. For example, after removing the filthy and disgusting sexual references in Molly Bloom's 40-page monologue at the end of James Joyce's **Ulysses**, we found that it can be performed in about three-and-one-half minutes.

Finally, we would like to assure our audience that we have absolutely no political agenda in taking this Initiative. (By the way, Mr. President, in case you are reading this, Howard Stern will not be appearing with MMSC any time in the near future).

Bob

In Memoriam

A tribute to Frank Matthews, by Don Wildy

Frank Matthews was in the first production Mohonk Mountain Stage Company mounted in New Paltz, "The Dock Brief," in October 1994, and reprised his role in MMSC's 1999 encore production. He was in the first full Readers Theatre evening, "Don Juan in Hell," in 1995, in Thornton Wilder's "The Queens of France" in 1996, and in both performances of James Joyce's "The Dead" in February 1997 and January 2000.

Frank was my personal friend since 1958 with never a single rift in our 45 year friendship, during which we performed together in Readers Theatre and staged productions many times. He lied systematically when trying out for new production companies here and there because he knew no one could possibly believe his staggering list of acting credits. He had remarkable theatrical instincts; precision point performance intuitions; talent to spare. Beside all that, as if that wasn't enough, he was just plain fun and an incalculable privilege to know.

Frank died at his retirement home in Fort Myers, Florida, January 26, 2004 at age 71.



*From the 1995 MMSC production of Don Juan In Hell.
Left to right: Don Wildy, Gerry Brooks, Susan Kraat and Frank Matthews.*

PROLOGUE is written and edited by Christine Crawfis and Nan Alderson; Bob Miller is a contributing writer.
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The Dark Corners of Daily Beings: The Short Stories of William Trevor

Sat., May 1, 2004, 8 PM

St. Andrew's Church

Main Street in New Paltz

Admission \$7



"My fiction may, now and again, illuminate aspects of the human condition, but I do not consciously set out to do so: I am a storyteller." Thus Sir William Trevor, one of Ireland's best living short story writers, describes himself. Lauded for his novels (two Hawthornden Prizes and three Whitbread Awards), short stories (Royal Society of Literature Award, PEN/Macmillan Silver Pen Award, and the *Irish Times* Irish Literature Prize) and novellas, he is best known for fiction that gives voice to the outcast, marginalized and victimized in society.

While his writing honors the tradition of Irish luminaries like James Joyce and Frank O'Connor, it also suggests the influence of other literary masters, from Chekhov to de Maupassant and Maugham, focusing on the lives of seemingly insignificant individuals whose lives are hallmarked by disappointment, failure and frustration. His work is not heavy-handed, though, but rather reveals his earlier training as a sculptor, with carefully drawn characters, finely chiseled prose, deft touches of black comedy, and elegantly rendered emotions. His characters often experience fragmentary moments of illumination, but the weight of inevitability or the difficulty of acknowledging truth leads them to retreat into the dull but familiar worlds from which they cannot escape.

His fiction frequently explores Irish history and politics, sometimes drawing on his own experience as a Protestant within the prevailing Irish Catholic majority. But the scope of his work is inclusive; he is just as likely to delineate the plight of a rural Catholic farming family as the downfall of the Anglo-Irish Protestant aristocracy.

Born on May 24, 1928, in Mitchelstown, County Cork, William Trevor Cox graduated with a degree in History from Trinity College in 1950, and worked as a sculptor, supporting himself by teaching. In 1952 he was joint winner of the International Year of the Political Prisoner art competition, and in 1960, feeling his art had become too abstract (and in need of a more reliable income), he moved to London. He became a copywriter in a London advertising agency and published several stories in both *Transatlantic Review* and *London Magazine*. A re-working of an unpublished story into the novel *The Old Boys* won him the Hawthornden Prize in 1964 and, since 1965, Trevor has made his living solely through writing.

Watch for more information on this program highlighting the masterful storytelling of William Trevor in the next issue of *Prologue*, and mark your calendars now to join us on Saturday, May 1, 2004 for **The Dark Corners of Daily Beings: The Short Stories of William Trevor.**

Back to the Dugout for Roger Angell

While we realize some of you have eagerly been awaiting the April 17th program, **Spring Training**, based on the essays of Roger Angell and his passion for our great American pastime of baseball, we regret that we have to throw you a "change up" and postpone this particular evening's musings. We could say, "the game had to be called on account of rain" or we were sending in a "designated hitter" in the form of a substitute program, but the truth is that we simply need to take a "seventh inning stretch." We'll be back on April 24th, when it will be "batter up" with Ron and Barbara Schade and the short stories of Annie Proulx.

Pocket Poems

Bobbi Katz (one of MMSC's loyal supporters and most recently featured as a reader in our *Bedtime Stories* series) has just published a new collection of poems for young people, entitled *Pocket Poems*. There will be a special reading of *Pocket Poems* at Ariel Booksellers in New Paltz on April 24, 2004 at 2 p.m. to celebrate this new book. Bobbi will be there to autograph books, and some of your favorite MMSC readers will be on hand to give voice to some of the wonderful selections in her book. Mark your calendars now for this celebration of a delightful new work for young readers.

Ariel Booksellers is at 3 Plattekill Avenue, just off Main Street (Rt. 299) in New Paltz, next to Starbucks.

Be sure to get your copy of *Vanguard Voices of the Hudson Valley*

We're very excited that MMSC's first journal will be rolling off the presses soon! *Vanguard Voices of the Hudson Valley: New Plays from the SUNY Dramatic Writing Program 2003* contains the revised scripts of all the plays presented in our November 2003 "Vanguard Voices Project," held at at Unison Arts & Learning Center

Copies are \$14.95 + tax and will be available at upcoming MMSC performances. *Vanguard Voices* will make a great addition to your library and a wonderful gift for any dramatic literature fans on your list!

Submission guidelines for our next journal, which will feature the poetry of Hudson Valley writers, will be posted soon on our website. Visit us at www.mmstageco.com.