

## Theatre Essentials 2006: A Dozen Names to Remember

Written by Mike Schulz

Wednesday, 20 December 2006 02:31

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Of course, the people who are most essential to the success of area theatre are the ones ponying up the dough to get it produced (and this includes *you*, my ticket-buying friends). But it's hard to imagine the theatre year being as enjoyable as it was without the contributions of the following 12 individuals, each of whom added considerable flair to several area productions - oftentimes at several area venues - in 2006.

**Christine Barnes.** In Augustana College's productions of *The Miser*, *The Real Inspector Hound*, and *Black Comedy*, Barnes stood out as a wonderfully clever comedienne; like a young Lisa Kudrow, she showed a knack for appearing hopelessly dizzy and *really* smart simultaneously. Yet with October's

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### *Nickel & Dimed*

, it was clear that the actress' gifts were only previously  
*hinted*

at; Barnes was exhilaratingly warm, mature, moving,  
*and*

laugh-out-loud funny.

I hope that her professionalism, invention, and confidence are inspiring to Barnes' fellow student  
actors, because it certainly is to this

*former*

student actor.



**Erin Churchill and Andrea Moore.** Combined, they were responsible for 11 of Circa '21's  
happiest musical-comedy performances. Churchill (nee Dickerson) was a delightful fox in  
*Aesop's Dynamic Duo*

and a foxy delight in

*Stand by Your Man: The Tammy Wynette Story*

, and in

*The Bootleggers on Broadway,*

Moore's

*Spamalot*

duet with Brad Hauskins (see below) was high-comedy heaven. But audience pleasure was  
doubled when Churchill and Moore appeared

*together*

; they were spirited and funny in

*Grease*

, electrifying in

*Cats*

, and are currently sensational in

*Irving Berlin's White Christmas*

and

*The Elves & the Shoemaker*

. Circa '21 often employs the same actors repeatedly; performers such as Churchill and Moore  
are the

*reason*

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**Pat Flaherty.** It would almost be easier to list the productions Flaherty *didn't* appear in, but here's what this tireless, marvelously spirited actor brought to the area theatre scene in 2006: Three performances for Genesis Guild, in *The Comedian, The Birds*, and - doing a superb Prospero - *The Tempest*. Three for the New Ground Theatre, in *Boy Gets Girl, String Fever*, and - probably his strongest work this year - *The Winning Streak*. He even showed up, and was spectacular, as Leonato in St. Ambrose University's *Much Ado About Nothing*. Here's hoping that Flaherty is just as generous with his talents in 2007.



**Brad Hauskins.** Yes, we were college roommates. Yes, he's a dear friend. Yes, he sang at my sister's wedding. But I'm listing Hauskins here because of his rather extraordinary 2006 at Circa '21; he's an energetic hoot in *The Elves & the Shoemaker*, delivered a witty, original script with *Ae* *sop's Dynamic Duo*, gave an expectedly dynamic performance in *The Bootleggers on Broadway* (for which, alongside gifted director Mark Lingenfelter, he wrote a *really* stylish book), managed to provide one of *The Ugly Duckling's* two laughs, and, with less than a day's notice, briefly assumed the hospitalized Tom Walljasper's role in *White Christmas*, and did so flawlessly. So there.

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**Allison Hendrix.** Despite considerable competition, the Clinton Showboat's MVP for 2006. Hendrix was effortlessly believable in *The Mousetrap*, a musical-comedy powerhouse in *Anything Goes*, touching and hilarious as two wildly different *Incredible Sex* characters, and stunningly vibrant in *Cabaret*, where she didn't even have a proper *role*; Hendrix exuded such charisma as the orchestra's pianist, and played so well, that it was difficult to tear your eyes away from her. She also served as *The King & I*'s music director, which was the only Showboat production I was disappointed by, and the only one in which Hendrix didn't appear. Coincidence?



**Jennifer Kingry.** How indispensable was Kingry to the Playcrafters and Richmond Hill Barn Theatre seasons? Well, without her, you wouldn't have *seen* much; Kingry's continually inspired lighting effects graced Playcrafters' *Over the River & Through the Woods*,

, *Rounding Third*

, *Sweet & Hot: The Songs of Harold Arlen*

, *Our Town*,

and

*Out of Sight, Out of Murder*

, as well as Richmond Hill's

*The Sunshine Boys*

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### *Cliffhanger*

,  
*Perfect Wedding, Proof*  
, and  
*A Bad Year for Tomatoes*  
. (She also designed the lighting for the Prenzie Players'  
*King Richard the Second*  
) Oh, and in addition to lighting  
*Proof*  
, she designed the set. And directed the hell out of the show. So, yeah ... pretty indispensable.

**Adam Lewis.** Certainly, he was essential to My Verona Productions' year, serving as the passionate anchor of *The Pillowman* and a literal one-man-show in *It's Just a Ride: A Tribute to Bill Hicks* and *The Santaland Diaries*. But equally impressive was his vigor and imagination in supporting turns at Circa '21; he was thrillingly alive in *Grease*, hysterically put-upon in *White Christmas*, unexpectedly empathetic as dentist ... and please tell me you didn't miss his unforgettable number in *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* *The Bootleggers on Broadway*.  
(For those in the know, it rivals his ventriloquist act in *Chicago*'s "We Both Reached for the Gun.")  
Someone needs to produce *Scoundrels* with Lewis in the lead ASAP.

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The Rosie Platts, an actress dedicated to local theatre; she has performed in a number of plays and musicals.



Michelle Williams, a young actress who has performed in a number of plays and musicals.