

# Civic's 'First-Run' Season

By Jen Poiry-Prough

To celebration its 87th season, the Fort Wayne Civic Theatre has decided to try something new. That is to say, every one of its productions this season will be shows it has never produced before.

Each play or musical in its 2014-15 season received critical and popular raves and many awards and nominations on or off Broadway, and Executive Director Phillip Colglazier believes each one will please local audiences of all ages for different reasons.

The first show of the season is crowd-pleaser *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*. Based on the 1988 film of the same name starring Michael Caine and Steve Martin, the musical comedy was written in 2004 and was nominated for 11 Tony awards, including Best Musical, Best Book, and Best Original Score. The show centers on two con men living on the French Riviera, one an older, more seasoned veteran of the game, the other a younger, more rough-around-the-edges swindler. The pair compete to con a young heiress out of \$50,000, and the loser agrees to leave town. But who is conning whom, really?

Colglazier says that *Scoundrels* was a perfect choice for the big summer show. Not only is it a hilarious, high-energy musical comedy, he says, but it will allow an opportunity for college students back home for the summer to be involved.

*Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* runs July 26 to August 10 on the Arts United stage and will be directed by Craig Humphrey, whose recent production of *Into the Woods* at IPFW nearly sold out and garnered popular acclaim.

The fall play at the Civic is traditionally a smaller production, and this year it will take place at the new Arts Lab at the Auer Center, across the street from the Performing Arts Center. Colglazier calls *Over the River and Through the Woods* a "delightful comedy" about a young, single, Italian-American man whose grandparents scheme to keep him in New Jersey instead of moving to Seattle to take his dream job.

"The play is very cleverly written," says Colglazier, "and it has lots of fun banter. It's all about the relationships this young man has with his grandparents who try to marry him off."

The play was written by Joe DiPietro, who also wrote the book and lyrics to *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*, and the books for *All Shook Up*, *Memphis* and *Heaven on Earth*. It will be directed by longtime Fort Wayne theatre star Jeffery Moore and will run September 12-28.

The Civic's holiday show is another big, splashy production based on a hit film, *Shrek The Musical*. The irreverent musical was a big hit on Broadway, earning eight Tony nominations, including Best Musical, Best Book, and Best Original Score.

"This show is just a blast," says Colglazier. "The corporate sponsors have flocked to this production already, and we can already tell this will be well-received by the



community. It's just fun for all."

Doug King is back to direct, having proven himself with several other high-profile, large-cast musical comedies at the Civic, most recently being this season's *Monty Python's Spamalot*.

*Shrek* runs November 8-23 on the Arts United Center stage.

Colglazier himself is very excited to direct the post-holiday musical, *Cabaret*. Set in 1931 against the backdrop of the rising Nazi power, the Kander and Ebb musical follows the ill-fated romance of American writer Cliff Bradshaw and Sally Bowles, a performer at the Kit Kat Klub, a seedy German nightclub. The Master of Ceremonies provides surrealistic, sexy distraction from the horrors of the reality facing the characters.

"I'm really looking forward to it," Colglazier says. "It's never been done at the Civic, even though it's a classic of the American theatre."

Written in 1966, the musical was made into a film starring Liza Minnelli and Joel Grey in 1972 and has been revived on Broadway and in London numerous times. The 1998 revival starred Alan Cumming and Natasha Richardson, both of whom won

Tony Awards for their performances. Cumming and Michelle Williams are starring in another revival on Broadway this year.

Colglazier is considering following the more updated style of these recent productions.

*Cabaret* will be performed on the Arts United Center stage and will run from February 14-March 1.

Following all the boozy sex at the cabaret, Gregory Stieber will return to direct the drama *33 Variations* at the Auer Center ArtsLab. The imaginative play by Moisés Kaufman shows the parallels between a present-day musicologist and the deaf 19th century composer as they each battle their own illnesses to follow their passions, racing against time and finding the peace to let go. Also nominated for numerous awards, the play was called "one of the most satisfying new plays that Broadway has seen in a long while" by Broadway World.

"This play is dramatic and poignant," says Colglazier, "but it is intellectually stimulating and entertaining as well." *33 Variations* runs March 20-April 4.

The Civic's spring musical is another musical comedy with enormous popular appeal. *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* showcases six hormone-added adolescents (played by adults) who learn valuable lessons about winning and losing while attempting to spell their way to love and acceptance. The musical was nominated for six Tony Awards and won two, including Best Book.

"It's delightful and funny," says Colglazier, "but it's adult material. It's definitely not for kids, but it's a very witty musical comedy piece."

*Spelling Bee* will be directed by John Tolley who most recently directed the Arena Dinner Theatre production of *Blithe Spirit* and is returning to the Civic after a long absence. *Spelling Bee* will run May 1-10 on the Arts United Center stage.

The 2014-15 season closes with the 6th Annual Northeast Indiana Playwright Festival. "The submission deadline is September 1," says Colglazier. "We've already had a few submissions for plays, but writers usually wait until close to the deadline to put their finishing touches on their scripts."

The festival will take place at Arts Lab next May 29-June 15. As always, festival events will include a reception, workshops, post-show discussions, play readings of the second- and third-place winning plays and a full production, directed by Colglazier, of the first-place play. Previous winners were *The Ladies in Cabin 10*, *Discom-BOOB-ulated*, *Althea's Well*, *The Wedding Gift* and *Whispers to Moon*. The title and genre of next year's winner will be announced in January 2015.

For more information on submitting a play to the festival or on obtaining a flex pass for the upcoming season, visit [www.fwcivic.org](http://www.fwcivic.org).

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