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Theater by John Moore

Two local companies prepare to mount "Producers" in '08

One good thing about pestering all 97 of our theater companies into helping us update our comprehensive online theater schedules all at once is you get the scoop on many exciting, previously unreleased projects in the works for 2008.

You can read our choices for the "10 shows to watch this winter" on Page 4F, but the biggest news of Aught Eight is that "The Producers" is now available to local companies, and we have productions coming to both Carousel Dinner Theatre in Fort Collins (opening Aug. 1) and Boulder's Dinner Theatre (Nov. 14).

That's, of course, **Mel Brooks'** tale of two theatrical producers who develop a get-rich scheme to produce the world's worst musical.

Carousel also will offer Irving Berlin's *White Christmas* (Nov. 1) — the same version the Denver Center Theatre Company used to draw a staggering 107,567 to the Buell Theatre last month. Berlin Fever continues with one-

night-only of "I Love a Piano" March 24 at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House. That's a Berlin revue created by Denver Center Attractions in 2002 and is now touring the country.

If you were around here 17 years ago, you know The Avenue's "Hot'l Baltimore" was a sensation, in part because it was presented environmentally in the historic Barth Hotel, where real residents wandered in and out throughout the performance. Director **Terry Dodd** will remount the **Lanford Wilson** drama at the same LoDo landmark, opening July 17. This time, "walk-by" roles will be sold to area celebrities to raise money for Senior Housing Options.

Thumbs up, Boulder

Colorado State theater-division director **Walton Jones**, creator of "The 1940s Radio Hour," made good on a promise to his father-in-law to attend Boulder's Dinner Theatre's staging (playing through Jan. 26). Jones has seen only one other "Radio

Hour" production since it was on Broadway in 1979.

"It was really enjoyable. The staging was terrific and everyone seemed to be truly having a good time," Jones said. "The cast was really appreciative of me coming. There were lots of hugs and pictures afterward."

Jones had read our review, which informed him that BDT had added some unscripted songs. "Having been forewarned," he said, "it didn't bother me much. But my publisher would probably have a different take on it."

Jones may have closed the book on "Radio Hour" nearly three decades ago, but once a writer, always a writer. "I learned some things watching it, and a couple of things need to be reordered and reworked," he said with a laugh. "Will it never end?"

Elitch Theatre update

For the second straight year, Colorado senators were rebuffed trying to secure \$3.5 million in federal parks money to kick-start Phase 2 of the

historic Elitch Theatre's renovation in northwest Denver. But new board president **Lee Roper** isn't deterred. She's already readying the application for the next fiscal go-round.

"We're moving the project forward," said Roper, whose board is in the planning stages for a \$10 million capital campaign that will launch by fall. In the meantime, efforts are being focused on cultivating corporate, foundation and individual donors.

Briefly ...

On Saturday, 17 professional actors will gather in Aspen to begin workshopping 10 new short plays for presentation Jan. 27-29 at Aspen High School as part of the second annual National MFA Playwright's Festival. **John Lithgow** judged the 85 entries. Joining winning student writers from master's programs around the country will be **Lance Tsosie**, a senior at Glenwood Springs High School. He won the "Aspiring Playwrights" competition. The 10 plays will then be staged in New York this April. Info: 970-948-1698 ...

Colorado Shakespeare Festival boss **Philip Sneed** is featured guest at the Bas Bleu Theatre's speaker series at 7:30 p.m. Jan. 20 in Fort Collins. Info: 970-498-8949 ...

The Rocky Mountain Theatre Association's "Festivention," an annual gathering of theater professionals from five states for workshops, lectures, performances and more, is Wednesday through Jan. 19 at Red Rocks Community College. Info: 303-914-6231.

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