



SPOTLIGHT

401 North 6th Street

March 24, 2018

www.fslt.org

Dates: Opening Night Gala of FSLT's production of *Calendar Girls* will be April 5. Regular evening performances will be April 6-7 and 11-14. A Sunday matinee will be offered on April 8.

Times: All evening performances begin at **7:30 p.m.** Patrons may be seated after 6:45 p.m. The matinee begins at **2:00 p.m.** Patrons may be seated after 1:15 p.m.

NEW Box Office Hours: The box office will be staffed, and tickets can be picked up, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Monday-Friday and on Saturdays, during the run of the show. Additionally, box office volunteers will return phone calls regarding reservation requests during variable daytime hours Monday-Saturday.

Reservations: Reservations can be made by calling 479-783-2966 (extn: 2). Calls will be returned in the order they are received. Reservations will be held until 15 minutes before the show. Gala Tickets \$27 / All other shows \$12.

Season Ticket Holders: Regular season ticket patrons are encouraged to call March 24-28 for preferred seating. They can also reserve a General Admission seat for every Season Ticket they have. General Admission reservations will not be filled until March 29.

Reminder: When you call to make a reservation, Dial 2.

FSLT's *Calendar Girls* Celebrates the Charms of Mature Women

"The women of Yorkshire are like the flowers of Yorkshire. Every stage of their growth has its own beauty. But the last stage is always the most glorious."
— John Clarke, *Calendar Girls*

The women of Knapley (England) Women's Institute dare to reveal a little skin, and in the process learn to reveal their true selves, in playwright Tim Firth's *Calendar Girls*, opening April 5 at the Fort Smith Little Theatre. Director Eric Wells helms the production, which is based on the popular 2003 movie *Calendar Girls* starring Helen Mirren and Julie Walters.

Annie (Nikki McDaniel) and Chris (Susan Hickam) are best friends who delight in keeping their other friends at the Women's Institute laughing. When Annie's husband John (Wayne Mathews), is diagnosed with leukemia, the ladies decide to use the proceeds from the group's annual calendar to raise money for a settee in the waiting room of the local cancer treatment center. Working behind the back of their dictatorial president Marie (Nancy Blochberger), Chris and Annie call on their friends to appear in an "alternative" calendar featuring nude photos of the women posed artfully behind knitting, sheet music, and floral arrangements. The other calendar girls are single mother and church organist Cora (Micki Voelkel), buxom trophy wife Celia (Jeannie Wilson), sassy retired schoolteacher Jessie (Carole Rogers), and timid "goodie two-shoes" Ruth (Barbara Richardson). The calendar's

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Director's Letter

I did not think I would be sitting in the Director's chair anytime soon after the success of *The Odd Couple (Female Version)*; but, oh boy was I wrong! After I committed to directing an off-season show called *Mythical Creatures and How to Approach Them*, the script for *Calendar Girls* landed in my lap. Having fallen in love with both stories, I was selected to direct both shows – BACK TO BACK! First, opening April 5, will be the full-run production of *Calendar Girls*. It follows a small group of women involved with a chapter of the Women's Institute who are raising money for a local hospital by selling nude calendars. As each woman gathers the courage to take off her clothes, she also gathers the strength to face a personal challenge in her life. Based on a true story set in England that became a popular movie, the script combines comedy, drama, anger, love, and loss. And don't worry – the naked poses are simply "suggested." There will be no nudity on our stage.

A week after *Calendar Girls* closes, I will direct the off-season show, *Mythical Creatures and How to Approach Them*. This is the hilarious adventure of two young wizards who travel abroad to meet mystical creatures including a unicorn, mermaids, and more. It's great entertainment for all ages. Suggested for 6+ years of age (approximately) and adults.

Both productions are in full rehearsal. Luckily, the casts and crews for both shows are so talented that it makes me a worry-free director despite being at rehearsals 6 days a week, working full-time, and going to school. There will be loads of talent this spring on the FSLT stage, entertaining audiences with two wildly different productions. I'm proud and privileged to direct them both, and I promise these are two shows you do not want to miss!

- Eric Wells, Director



Off Season Production: Join Us On A Journey Of Whimsical Fantasy



Mythical Creatures And How To Approach Them is a short comedy written by Travis Greisler. Directed by Eric Wells, this hilarious production is geared to open just as *Calendar Girls* closes. Set along the lines of J.K. Rowling's famous wizarding world, we get to travel with two students Harmony Ginger (Jamie Lambdin) and Peter Wisechair (Brandon Bolin), whose semester abroad with Professor Sal Manderfin (Nathan Stockemer) is filled with different magical "mythical" creatures – like the elusive phoenix (Adeena Thomas & Allison Jones); the wise hippogriff Beaky McTalons (Jennifer Roller); the sassy unicorn Sparkles Ya Face (Shannon Stoddard); the man-crazy mermaids Aquatta (Valerie Valentine), Adella (Victoria Walden), and Adona (Meghan Partain); the flamboyant cyclops Virgil (Eric Krigbaum), who is in love with the very intimidating gorgon Medusa (Jordan Garton); and the clumsy hoarder griffin Gary (Garrett Young), who finds love when he meets the gorgeously fierce dragon Linda (Summer Robinson).

Assisted by an efficient crew comprising of Rikkee Black (producer), Sherry Hester (stage manager), Suzanne Thomas (props), Jennifer Chick and Kelsey Flippo (stage hands), Orville and Brenden Chick (techies), with Rebekah and Stephen Martin (lighting design) – Director Wells is able to sit back and focus on the getting the laughter rolling with this funny script.

Performances will begin at 7:30 p.m. (doors will open at 6:45 p.m.). Tickets are \$5 per person at the door (open seating). As this is an off-season production, no reservations will be accepted, and admission is not provided by your season ticket. Suggested for 6+ years of age (approximately) and adults.

Calendar Girls opens April 5 *continued from page 1*

unexpected success strains their friendships and reveals the women's inner strengths. This comedy, based on a true story, is a beautiful celebration of women's friendships.

The cast also includes Angela Covey as the aristocratic Lady Cravenshire, Kiane Anderson as broccoli-expert Brenda, London Yardley as makeup artist Elaine, Bradley Kidder as Chris's patient husband Rod, Zeke Sidwell as the shy photographer Lawrence, and Thomas Dudley as the sleazy commercial producer Liam.

The crew includes Jamie Lambdin as assistant director, Shannon Stoddard and Nathan Stockemer as co-producers, Eric Krigbaum as stage manager, Neal Goodwin as props master, Rebekah and Stephen Martin as lighting designers, Kelsey Flippo as lightboard operator, Kim Kidder and Thomas Iverson as stagehands, and Aaron Ray as the show's graphic designer.

Director Eric Wells is excited about the show's technical challenges: "The blocking is especially difficult for the 'nude photo shoot scene' where the ladies are not going to be actually naked, but they must be positioned to create that illusion."

Susan Hickam, who plays Chris, describes her character's journey: "My character strains her flower shop business, her marriage, and her

friendships when she does the right thing, but does it partially for the wrong reason. I don't think she starts off that way. She just got sidetracked. It can happen to any of us." Nikki McDaniel says that the relationship between Chris and her character, Annie, reminds her of her own lifelong best friend. She adds, "I think FSLT's intimate stage allows the audience to capture emotions from the actors that might otherwise be missed on a full, proscenium stage. But the 'suggested nudity' in this show provides challenges galore!" Barbara Richardson will make her FSLT debut in *Calendar Girls* in the role of Ruth. She says, "I like the idea of a group of women taking charge of their sexuality and using it for good. It is sort of similar to *Steel Magnolias* with its cast of strong women."

Calendar Girls opens Thursday, April 5 and continues evening performances on April 6-7 and 11-14. A Sunday Matinee is scheduled for April 8. Tickets for the Opening Night Gala performance are \$27; all other performances are \$12. Season ticket holders may call for reservations beginning Saturday, March 24. Reservations will be open to the general public beginning Thursday, March 29. Call 479-783-2966 (extn: 2) to make your reservation. And, don't delay to reserve your seat – the nudity onstage will be an illusion, but the laughter and tears provoked by *Calendar Girls* will be very real.



Special Thanks To These Local Businesses

Opening nights at FSLT will be even more special this year, thanks to **Sodie's Wine and Spirits**. They are generously providing an assortment of wine and champagne for FSLT patrons attending Gala Opening Night performances.

Not only is **The Artistic Bean** a great coffee house in downtown Fort Smith, they are also a great supporter of FSLT. We are thankful they will be providing their wonderful coffee 'free of charge' during all show intermissions this year.

Once again, **Alert Alarm Systems** has stepped up to show their community spirit by helping FSLT upgrade to a wireless alarm notification system. With great equipment and service, they keep our theatre safe and sound.

Help From Hennessy

Thanks to a gift from the William T. and May P. Hennessy Foundation, FSLT has now purchased and installed new stage microphones. Using advanced technology, the new mics will improve sound quality for our audience as well as for actors listening through backstage speakers.



Sam Terry - First National Bank Trust Officer, representing the Hennessy Foundation, presents boxes containing new mics to Carole Rogers - FSLT President.

New Stage Lights!

The unsung heroes who use their expertise to design and run lights for FSLT, finally have some up-to-date tools to use in their craft. This month, many of our old stage lights have now been replaced with new Source 4 fixtures. Their superior design makes them easy to adjust and position, while generating less heat and providing an even light spread for our stage. This exciting purchase was made possible by a generous gift from the **Western Arkansas Community Foundation** (an affiliate of the Arkansas Community Foundation), recent memorial gifts, and donations to our Annual Fund.



Pettus Kincannon (left) - Exec. Dir., Western Arkansas Community Foundation, with Jeremy Marston (right) - FSLT volunteer, sit among the old light fixtures that have now been replaced.

Fort Smith Little Theatre
SPOTLIGHT

P.O. Box 3752, Fort Smith, AR 72913

www.fslt.org

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***NEW BOX
OFFICE HOURS!***

Our Box Office will be staffed, and tickets may be picked up, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Monday-Friday and on Saturdays, during the run of the show. Phone calls to confirm your reservation requests will be returned by Box Office volunteers during variable hours Monday-Saturday.

This important change will allow us to return your calls in a timely fashion while providing our FSLT volunteers the flexibility to assist with reservations while accommodating their employment schedule.

From the Top...

Congratulations to Jim Moody and his talented cast and crew for starting off our 71st season with such a stunning presentation. It was a most enjoyable production. The FSLT stage has not been graced with such a beautiful set in many years.

As we all know, it takes many components to relay a story on stage. Of course, the set is one of them, since it positions us in the time and place in which the story occurs. Added to that are lights and sound. We are so pleased to have recently made exciting improvements in both these crucial (and expensive!) areas. I hope you will read in this issue how memorials, Annual Fund donations, plus gifts from the **Western Arkansas Community Foundation** and the **Hennessy Foundation** helped purchase some new equipment that will benefit our performances for years to come.

Another component is the story itself, and our next production is a wonderful example of a script that is well-written, meaningful, and entertaining. It is based on the true story of a group of ladies, who through courage and determination, leave their pride at the doorstep and create an "alternative" calendar to raise money for a new settee for the local hospital. You will fall in love with these ladies whose stories go far deeper than just disrobing for a good cause. I think if you look closely you may even recognize yourself or a close friend in one of the characters. Since I am fortunate to be in the cast of this production, I am very familiar with this powerful story, and I do hope that you will come spend a little time with *The Calendar Girls*.

Next Up

Auditions for *The Fox on the Fairway* by Ken Ludwig will be held at the theatre at 7 p.m. on Monday and Tuesday, April 23 and 24. Duff Taylor will be directing. Production dates are May 31-June 9. The cast calls for 3 females (ages 20-45+), and 3 males (ages 20-55+). For more information, visit our website www.fslt.org, or find us on Facebook.

Season Ticket holders are urged to call before March 29 for reservations.