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**W**e are extraordinarily grateful for the gifts of products and services we receive. The following individuals and businesses have been generous enough to donate everything from donuts to file cabinets. The gifts are

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**GROUNDWELL OF SUPPORT FOR GROUNDBREAKING**

**T**wo River Theatre Company broke ground Wednesday, October 22, 2003, for its new 300-seat theatre in Red Bank. More than 175 TRTC subscribers, board members, contributors, business owners, local residents, and VIP's attended the ceremony.

Community leaders, educators and municipal, state, and federal government officials were in attendance. David Tarver of the Red Bank Board of Education and Executive Director/Founder of the Red Bank Education and Development Initiative spoke about how theatre has the power to change lives and how, personally, theatre had greatly enhanced his own education.

The Honorable Edward McKenna, Mayor of Red Bank, spoke of his support for the new theatre and said it would serve as an anchor to the city's arts corridor along with the Count Basie Theatre and the new Children's Cultural Center. It was also noted that the theatre will have a tremendous economic impact in Red Bank. A recent Rutgers University report states that people attending not-for-profit arts events spend an average of \$25.94 per person, in addition to the price of admission. This money

rolls back into the community to hotels, restaurants, area shopping, and babysitters.

Other participating/supporting dignitaries included: U.S. Congressman Rush Holt; State Senator Joseph Kyrillos and Assemblyman Joseph Azzolina; Paul G. Gaffney II, President of Monmouth University, and Dr. Edward Westervelt, Superintendent of Red Bank Regional Schools. A video crew from Brookdale Community College documented the proceedings, and students from the Red Bank Charter School helped with decorations and the presentation of the requisite "gold shovels." ~



*(left to right) Architect Stewart Jones; Congressman Rush Holt; The Honorable Edward McKenna, Mayor of Red Bank; Founders/Producers of the theatre Joan and Robert Rechnitz; Artistic Director Jonathan Fox; and TRTC Board President Mary Carol Stunkel.*

**AT RISK YOUTH GAIN ACCESS TO THEATRE**

**T**wo River Theatre Company has expanded the reach of our Student Matinee series by introducing *No Seats Empty* – an arts access initiative serving Monmouth County's poorest teens.

Two River's "on school-time" performances have been an important part of high school curricula in our area for several years. Our student series has been growing since we introduced it eight years ago

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# THAT 70's SHOW

By Jonathan Fox, Artistic Director

**1977:** Jimmy Carter, *Saturday Night Fever*, mood rings, ABBA. Gas lines, leisure suits, the New York City blackout, *Star Wars*. Son of Sam, pet rocks, Howard Cosell and Telly Savalas hosting "Battle of the Network Stars." And across the great pond over to England, the hot news was the Sex Pistols, punk rock, the Queen's Silver Jubilee, high inflation, unemployment, labor strikes ... and a hit stage comedy that became an enormously popular television movie, *Abigail's Party*.

I recently asked a British friend if he knew *Abigail's Party*, a hilarious comedy that is fairly obscure in the U.S. "Of course," he said, "every

one in England knows *Abigail's Party*. It's so much a part of our culture."

Indeed, since appearing in 1977, *Abigail's Party* has become not just a cult classic of enduring popularity; it has become a cultural touchstone, shorthand for a garish middle-class 1970's materialism, for polyester party dresses, and for a 1970's style of suburban home decoration. There's even a London bar named Abigail's Party, which serves cheese cubes and pineapple on toothpicks, a cocktail party favorite of the time.

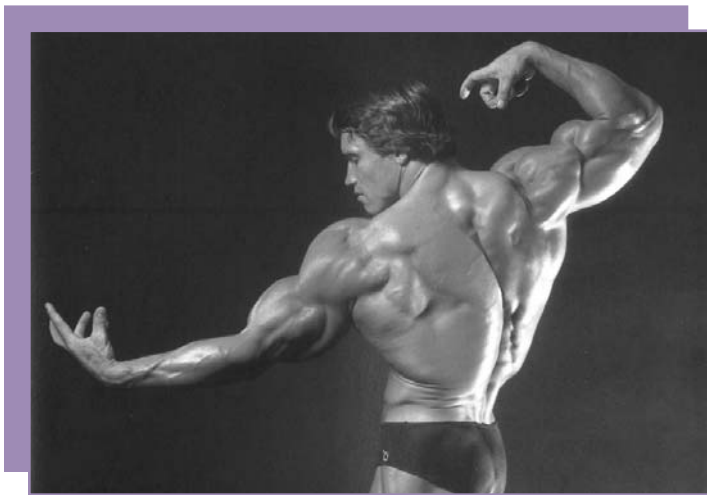
Written by the independent filmmaker Mike Leigh, the play centers on Beverly, a cheerful, yet bitchy, party hostess. Leigh, director of the acclaimed movies *Naked*, *Secrets and Lies*, and *Topsy-Turvy*, is known for his months-long improvisational work with his actors in developing his scripts, including *Abigail's Party*. His work is known for its depiction of the desperately small concerns of ordinary life.

"Arnold" ~ *The new Governor of California back in 1976*

Imagining herself to be the perfect party hostess, Beverly force-feeds drinks and cigarettes on her uneasy guests: Angela and Tony, a couple who have just moved in next door, and Susan, a middle-aged divorcee who has sought refuge from her teenage daughter's wild party down the street. As the evening degenerates into drunken and caustic behavior, Beverly's marriage to Laurence, an over-worked real estate agent, starts to unravel, with disastrous results.

Curiously, the play has remained obscure in the U.S. Though the characters are specifically British, they should not be unfamiliar to Americans. Underneath the play's hilarity is a fascinating look at the fierce need to acquire material possessions as a means of masking domestic unhappiness. Some have referred to *Abigail's Party* as the British version of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* for its biting and satiric look at marital relations and for its *vino veritas* social humiliations.

Though *Abigail's Party* takes place in that great year, 1977 – and though we may no longer wear leisure suits, listen to José Feliciano, and stare at lava lamps – the play's humor and pathos are as fresh and relevant as if it had been written today. ~



## THE GLORY OF EVERYDAY NOTHINGNESS

**M**ore than thirty years after his directorial debut, Mike Leigh continues to enthrall, disturb, and provoke television, theatre, and movie audiences with his unique vision of society. In 1977, a television version of *Abigail's Party*, his hit West-end comedy, which opens at Two River Theatre Company on January 15, was seen by 16 million viewers, making it one of the most watched programs in the UK's history.

The British born playwright and filmmaker is one of international cinema's biggest names, with two Academy Award nominations and the Cannes Film festival's Palme d'Or to his credit. Independence and autonomy have always been Leigh's watchwords. He never directs from other people's scripts, chooses his own actors, and retains total control over his productions. This stubborn streak has helped to produce some of the funniest and most challenging works to grace the recent stage and screen.

As the actor Timothy Spall puts it, "Mike Leigh's area is the glory of everyday nothingness which he elevates to great drama."

Mike Leigh's acutely-observed vignettes on life – usually featuring the poor, the dispossessed and the downright odd – have captured the essence of their times, whether they be the aspirational 70's, the socially divisive 80's or the neurotic 90's. ~

# GUILD SPONSORED SUBSCRIBER PARTY A SUCCESS!

The first TRTC Subscriber Party was held Saturday, November 15th in the Atrium at the Galleria in Red Bank. Members of our new Guild provided food, drink and awards to honor our subscribers. Subscribers were treated to live music by a jazz trio, a 10th Anniversary slide show with photos from all the past productions, a theatre trivia game with prizes, and, of course, the Awards.

The first group of subscribers to receive awards were those patrons who have been subscribers for all ten seasons. Each was presented a certificate by Founder/Executive Producer Robert Rechnitz to honor their continuing support of TRTC. We simply can't thank them enough! Those subscribers were:



*Left to right ~ 10 Season subscriber, Gloria Kronisch, R. Rechnitz and Edward Kronisch*

- Paula and Charles Adler
- Marie and Robert Arbour
- Jackie and Howard Aronson
- Teresa and Lewis Augustine
- Peggy and Gerald Baker
- Lois and Ronald Barrett
- Carol and Jules Bellisio
- Judith Benn
- Joan Brearley
- Nancy and Edward Butler
- Linda and Samuel Chororos
- Ann and Frank Ciesla
- Marjorie and Paul Collins
- Juliet Cozzi and Ronald Gumbaz
- Helen Decker
- Gail and John Duffy
- Judith and Richard Fuller
- Susan and Brian Greenberg
- Whit and James Greene
- Karen and Gregory Harquail
- Ellen and Jay Herman
- Marti and Bruce Huber
- Catherine and Evan Jahos
- Susan and John Karlin
- Harriet Primack
- Jackie and Paul Royce
- June and Morton Seligman
- MaryLou and George Strong
- Mary Carol and Kenneth Stunkel
- Jan and Louis Thompson
- Patricia and William Thorne
- Carolyn and Morton Wall
- Margot and William Wartens
- Susan and Frank Whyman



*Associate Producer, Joan Rechnitz (second from right) joins TRTC subscribers, residents of The Greenbriar at Marlboro.*

**THE VERY FIRST SUBSCRIBERS** were identified by Bob & Joan Rechnitz by referring to their guest lists from the first theatre-organizing parties which were held in 1994. The first three (and continuing) subscribers were acknowledged with special awards.

#### THEY ARE:

- Juliet Cozzi and Ronald Gumbaz
- Linda McKean
- Whit and James Greene

#### OTHER SUBSCRIBER CATEGORIES AND WINNERS WERE:

- *Oldest* / Marvin Broder (87)
- *Youngest* / David Colombini (15)

- *Travels furthest to the theatre*  
Velva Wright (54.29 miles)
- *Purchased most subscriptions*  
Dolores Hofmann
- *Best Group Sales Organizers*  
Helen Decker  
Pearl and Gerald Fine

# TRTC ALUM MACDONALD STARS IN TRUMBO

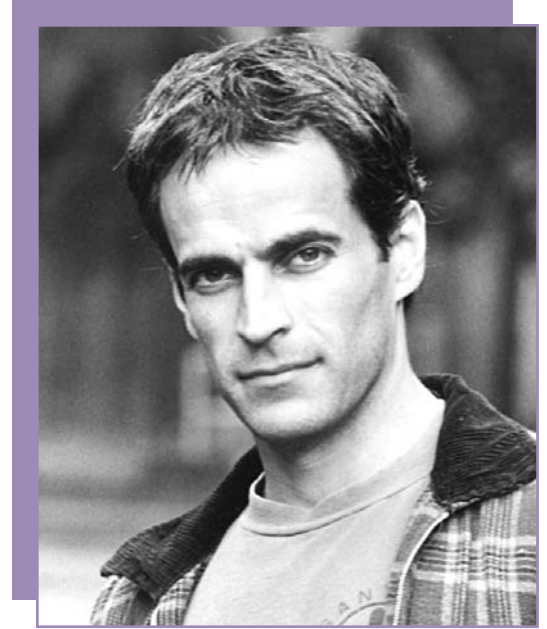
Gordon MacDonald, who played Tom in the 1997 TRTC production of *The Glass Menagerie*, is currently starring in the Off-Broadway production of *Trumbo*, about the life of Blacklisted writer Dalton Trumbo.

In the two-actor play, Gordon anchors the production in the roles of the Narrator and as Christopher, Dalton Trumbo's son. The title role of Dalton Trumbo has been played by an ever growing list of noted actors such as: Nathan Lane, Ed Harris, Chris Cooper, Alec Baldwin, Eddie Izzard, Tim Robbins, Roy Scheider, Richard Dreyfuss, Bill Irwin,

and Aidan Quinn. Recently included were F. Murray Abraham, Brian Dennehy, and Gore Vidal. Not bad company.

Just a few of Gordon's credits include: performances in major films such as *A Thin Red Line* and Al Pacino's *Looking For Richard*, and he won the Dean Goodman Award for San Jose Rep's production of Marina Carr's *By the Book of Cats* opposite Holly Hunter.

*Trumbo* is playing through January 18th at the Westside Theatre, 407 W. 43rd St. in NYC. For tickets call (212) 239-6200. ~



Gordon MacDonald

## PASSIONATE POETIC PLEASURE DOME

Following the dramatic reading of the Samuel Coleridge poem "Kubla Khan" by professional actress and TRTC Board Member, Maureen Silliman, Robert Rechnitz delivered a pas-

sionate and poetic speech about his desire to create, as described in the Coleridge poem, "a pleasure dome."

"Like Kubla Khan, we plan to build a pleasure-dome. It will be a *bit* smaller than the twice five miles of walls and towers that Kubla Khan had in mind. But it will be like Kubla's, a savage place, it will be holy and enchanted, it will be haunted by women wailing for their demon-lovers, it will be filled with visions of damsels with dulcimers, and knights, and ogres, villains, and heroes. And all that great legion, the giant, mythic figures of the imagination which Two River Theatre will labor to create in the years to come will generate a world which speaks a language native to the human heart. A language that children know, but that adults forget, because we do not speak it often enough and the vocabulary slips away. But yet it is our native language, and when we hear it spoken—by Shakespeare, by Chekhov, by Tennessee Williams, by Tom Stoppard—we recall what has slipped away from us. We recollect with a happy shock of recognition the language native to our hearts. Then, with joy, watching the play, we sense that, for a while at any rate, we have

come back to our true home and we feed on honey dew and drink the milk of Paradise.

Then we leave the theater and go to our everyday homes, and for a time we continue to feed on these mythic foods and we perceive dimly or strongly, for an hour, a day, just how inadequate our everyday diets are, how inadequate is a steady diet of only the job, commercial enterprise, the bottom line. Theatre calls to us, whispers in our ears, urgently and insistently, "You Must Change Your Life." And we yearn to grasp the unlive life, we sense it is properly our birthright. If only we could take the time, if only we can find the way to get it right, to sort things out, to get back on track.

This building, our theatre, should make that unlive life more nearly possible for this community and all of its inhabitants."

# LISA WOWS 'EM AT APPLAUSE AWARDS

The 15th Annual Applause Awards were held in New Brunswick on Monday, November 3, 2003, sponsored by the New Jersey Theatre Alliance. The awards recognize those who support our professional theatres and those who help keep them a strong viable artistic force in their communities.

TRTC's Director of Audience Services, Lisa Fardella, was recognized and brought the house down with her humorous remarks during her acceptance speech. She was then given an impromptu test of her (now legendary) knowledge of the TRTC audience database. Bob Rechnitz and Jonathan Fox, who were onstage with her during the presentation, pulled a phone number at random out of our database and asked Lisa if she could identify the number. Lisa knew the name, address, ages, and how long these TRTC patrons had been



*Lisa Fardella poses with her Applause Award and her mother, Cathy Callamaras (a TRTC Guild member!).*

buying tickets. If you happen to forget any pertinent information about yourself, just call Lisa. ~

## AT RISK YOUTH GAIN ACCESS TO THEATRE (Continued from page 1)

and the recent matinee of *The Tragedy of Carmen* was completely sold out.

Through the *No Seats Empty* program, developed in conjunction with an advisory board of local educators, Two River Theatre Company will be introducing over one thousand economically disadvantaged students to the enriching and educational world of live professional theatre.

As Monmouth County's only professional theatre dedicated to the classics, Two River is uniquely qualified to serve the needs of this important audience. This is not a program that sends scaled down productions into inappropriate performance spaces like gym-atoriums or cafe-nasiums. This is a substantial effort designed to introduce students to the themes, ideas, lessons, and language of great literature in a professional theatre setting.

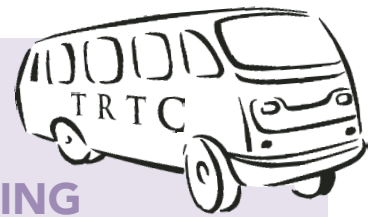
Since our founding in 1994, Two River Theatre Company has been applauded throughout New Jersey for our ability to stage difficult works in ways that both entertain and enlighten. Through *No Seats Empty*, Two River will be sending into the participating schools teaching artists who will help students discover the relevance of each show to their own lives. As always, study guides and a post show discussion with the actors will be important components of the educational experience.

*No Seats Empty* has been made possible by grants from many local and national supporters, including Target Stores, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, The Gannett and Sunfield Foundations, and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. ~

## KIND IN-KIND GIFTS DESERVE KUDOS (Continued from page 1)

used in our productions, in our offices, and for our audience development projects. Thank you all!

2Senza  
Broadway Grill  
Brookdale Community College  
Chiafullo's  
Gwendolyn Cherry  
Count Basie Theatre  
Danny's Steak House & Seafood Grille  
Desantis Graphic Design  
Dorn's Photography Limited  
Dunkin' Donuts (Water St.)  
Food Circus Supermarkets  
The Galleria  
House of Coffee  
La Chalupa  
Mature Marketing Network  
Red Bank River Center  
Rumson BuyRite  
Allen Sherman  
Sickles Market  
Kathryne and Richard Singleton  
Mary Carol and Curtis Lee Smith  
Duncan Thecker  
Triumph Brewing Company  
June Wilson  
Windward Deli



## STILL LOOKING FOR A VAN

Anyone have a van they can donate to the theatre (with/or without extra passenger seats)? Our Production Manager, Zeke Zaccaro, and his staff are in need of a van to haul sets and props from hither and yon...and to pick up some of the in-kind donations from the folks listed above. Please go look in your garage to see if you have one. All donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. Call Suzanne Longley at 732-345-1400 or email: slongley@trtc.org.

# HELP YOUR THEATRE GROW



**T**RTC had its largest opening night audience ever with *The Tragedy of Carmen* and the student performance was a sell-out. However, the old adage, “word of mouth is the best advertising,” remains true. If you liked *The Tragedy of Carmen*, please tell a friend. Invite them to *Abigail’s Party* and help your theatre grow.

*Left to right ~ Cassandra McConnell (Carmen) and Aaron Serotsky (Don José) garnered rave reviews from the New York Times, The Star-Ledger, and the Asbury Park Press.*

*Photo by T. Charles Erickson*

## \$300 Raffle Winner

Virginia and Clinton King, Jr., TRTC subscribers, of Red Bank won the \$300 Raffle held for those ticket buyers who participated in the Two River Theatre demographic and marketing survey conducted by the theatre last fall.

The survey provided much useful information that we hope will make our audiences grow. A special “thank you” to all who participated.

**ONE** OF THE GREAT PLEASURES IN LIFE IS EXPERIENCING A MOVING NIGHT AT THE THEATRE. THE BLOOD POUNDS, THE SENSES AWAKEN, AND THAT SPARK BETWEEN YOU AND THE ACTORS IGNITES POSSIBILITIES YOU’VE NEVER CONSIDERED. YOU FEEL ALIVE AND YOU WANT TO **SHOUT!**

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NEWS FROM TWO RIVER THEATRE COMPANY  
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