

# Backstage Pass

Minnesota State Mankato  
Theatre & Dance

April 2009

## Mame aims to cheer you up

Optimism is something that has been fleeting in these days of government bailouts and stock market fluctuations. Mame Dennis's world is all about optimism. That is what I love about this story.

*Mame* opened on May 24, 1966, at the Winter Garden Theatre in New York City and ran 1,508 performances, originally directed by Gene Saks. With a cast that included Angela Lansbury as Mame Dennis, everyone's best friend, Bea Arthur as the grand dame of the American musical theatre, and the quirky and wonderful Jane Connell as "Nanny-in-law" Agnes Gooch, it is no surprise this musical ran for so long. The story of Mame is told through the eyes of Patrick Dennis, Mame's only living relative whom she meets while throwing yet another fabulous party where the gin flows freely and the Charleston is a way of life.

The novel, written by Patrick Dennis, has had many incarnations. It went from the original novel to a play written by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee to a movie starring Rosalind Russell to a Broadway musical starring Lansbury and finally to a movie musical starring Lucille Ball. With music and lyrics by Jerry Herman and original dances by Onna White, the story of Mame comes to vivid life.

*Mame* is a classic piece of American musical theatre that Minnesota State Mankato is proud to bring to you. The purpose of theatre is to help the audience escape all of the things we see on television and hear on the radio. Please escape and enjoy!

—Paul Finocchiaro



### Needing a little Christmas

Ito (Maxwell Thao, left) festoons Agnes Gooch (Jessica Dougherty) in Christmas decorations while Mame Dennis (Mollie Fischer) trips the light fantastic with her young nephew, Patrick (Lucas Hendrickson). For more information about the show, including an interview with director/choreographer Paul Finocchiaro, visit us online at [MSUTheatre.com](http://MSUTheatre.com). Tickets for *Mame* are available online or by calling the Theatre & Dance Box Office at 507-389-6661 from 4-6 p.m., Monday-Friday. It is sponsored by Immanuel St. Joseph's-Mayo Health System.

## Spring Dance Collection Concert coming soon



**THE  
SPRING DANCE  
COLLECTION  
2009**

Featuring Andreas Guest Artists  
**GABE MASSON & ALAN SENER**

7:30 P.M.  
April 30 & May 1  
1:00 P.M. May 2, 2009

**507-389-6661** **Theatre & Dance** **MSUDance.com**  
MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

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### Three Students, Two Guest Artists and Three Faculty

This year's Spring Dance Collection Concert includes pieces choreographed by faculty Julie Kerr-Berry, Daniel Stark and Paul Finocchiaro; two Andreas Guest Artists, Alan Sener and Gabe Masson; and three students, Staci Lipps, Stephanie Narlock and Aly Townsend. It also includes nearly 50 dancers from the Department of Theatre & Dance in styles ranging from tap to modern.

Performances are 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday, April 30 and May 1, with a 1 p.m. matinee on Saturday, May 2, in the Ted Paul Theatre. Individual tickets are \$9 regular, \$8 for senior citizens, youth 16 and under and groups of 15 or more, \$7 for current Minnesota State students. Tickets may be purchased by calling the Theatre & Dance Box Office at 507-389-6661 4-6 p.m., Monday-Friday, or by visiting our [MSUTheatre.com](http://MSUTheatre.com).

Sener restages a piece called "White Trash," in which he will perform along with faculty member Stark. They are joined by two student dancers who endured multiple call backs to win the coveted roles. Note: This piece includes subject matter that may be offensive to some people. It will be presented right before intermission for anyone who wishes to skip seeing it.

Sener was an Andreas Guest Artist in fall 2008. Spring 2009 Guest Artist Masson has choreographed "A Common Language," which he cast and began to rehearse during a February residency.

Lipps and Narlock, graduating seniors who have had pieces performed before, will present "Painting a Memory" and "Plastic People," respectively. Townsend, also a senior, will present "Sanctified Memory."

Coming soon ... *Rabbit Hole*

## Lindsay-Abaire won 2007 Pulitzer Prize for it



Cynthia Nixon as Becca and John Slattery as Howie, grieving parents from the Manhattan Theater Club's production of *Rabbit Hole*.

Becca and Howie Corbett have everything a family could want, until a life-shattering accident turns their world upside down and leaves the couple drifting perilously apart. *Rabbit Hole* charts their bittersweet search for comfort in the darkest of places and for a path that will lead them back into the light of day.

The David Lindsay-Abaire show is directed by first-year MFA Di-

recting candidate Michael James, who was seen onstage this season as "Dr. Chumley" in *Harvey* and "Headmaster" in *The History Boys*. It features Jeff E. Smith as "Howie" and RaeAnne Carlson as "Becca."

The cast and crew are grateful to members of the One Bright Star organization for sharing their own stories about the loss of a child to

help in their preparation. Some of them will join us after the opening night performance on Thursday, April 23, for a "talk-back" session on the subject. Free and open to the public, whether you attended that night's show or not, it will immediately follow the show sometime after 9:30 p.m. in the Andreas Theatre.

Individual tickets are \$9 regular, \$8 for senior citizens, youth 16 and under and groups of 15 or more, \$7 for current Minnesota State students.

Tickets may be purchased by calling the Theatre & Dance Box Office at 507-389-6661 4-6 p.m., Monday-Friday, or by visiting our [MSUTheatre.com](http://MSUTheatre.com).

For more information about One Bright Star and services they provide, visit them online at [www.onebrightstar.org](http://www.onebrightstar.org).

## We get "real" with a little help from our friends

Although much of theatre is illusion, sometimes we have to "get real." Such was the case with our most recent production, *Tobacco Road*.

Although the script calls specifically for a Chinaberry Tree, we soon found those not indigenous to Minnesota. So instead, we turned to the folks at the City of Mankato's Public Works, Division of Parks and Forestry, who generously found a tree on city property that needed to be taken down. With the help of Scenic Designer Amanda

Rozmiarek and Technical Director Terry Nelson, the tree was loaded into and "planted" in the Andreas Theatre to lend a great deal of reality to the scenic design.

For the upcoming *Rabbit Hole*, our efforts to create a \$2 million New York home were greatly assisted through special contributions from Kato Flooring and Lowe's of Mankato.

The audience is so up close and personal in the Andreas Theatre, and there are some illusions we just can't create with paint.



Season brochures in the mail in mid-April

## 'Tis the season for Highland Summer Theatre

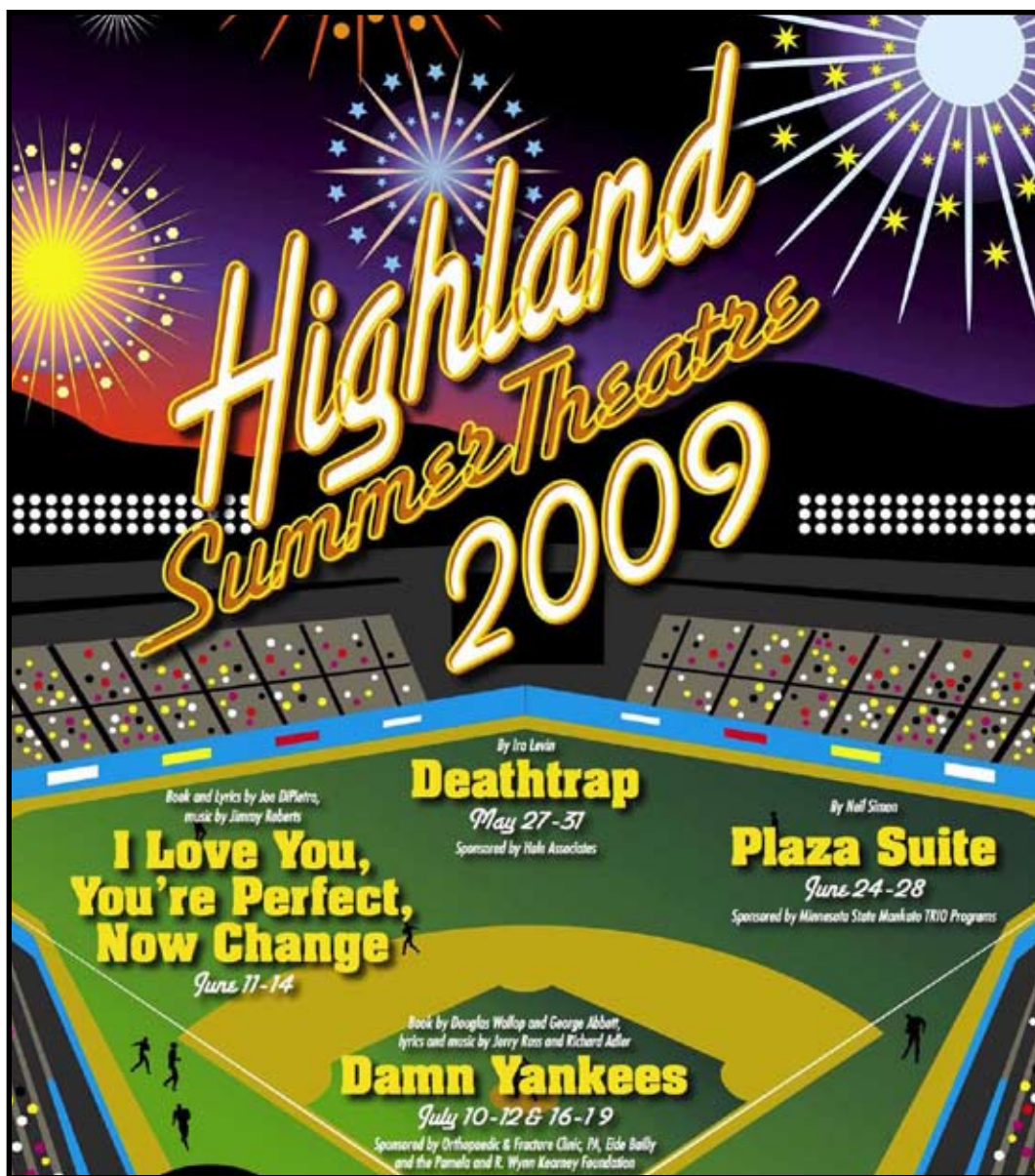
Perhaps the truest indication of the upcoming summer—and with it our 43rd annual Highland Summer Theatre—is the opening of our spring musical, *Mame*. It's Minnesota, after all, so you can't trust the weather!

This summer we invite you to "Come play with us" as we present four light and fun productions.

In the lead-off position is, *Deathtrap*, in which you meet playwright Sidney Bruhl who takes a deadly approach to solving his writer's block. It is sponsored by Hale Associates and plays May 27-31.

The second show is the Mankato premiere of *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*. This celebration of the mating game takes on the truths and myths behind that contemporary conundrum known as "the relationship." It rounds second June 11-14.

Playing third for our summertime team is *Plaza Suite* by Neil Simon. Hilarity abounds in this portrait of three couples successfully occupying a suite at the Plaza. For this one we welcome back alumnus E. J. Subkoviak and send off MFA candidate Susan Vee Hansen. It is sponsored by the Minnesota State



Mankato TRIO Programs. It will be in town for a five-performance series June 24-28.

Batting cleanup for us is *Damn Yankees*, sponsored by Eide Bailly, the Orthopaedic & Fracture Clinic and the Pamela & Wynn Kearney Foundation. In it, middle-aged baseball fanatic Joe Boyd trades his soul to the Devil (the charming but devious Mr. Applegate)

for a chance to lead his favorite team to victory in the pennant race against the New York Yankees.

Season subscriptions, guaranteeing you great box seats for all four offerings, are just \$60. Individual "game" tickets go on sale May 18 at [MSUTheatre.com](http://MSUTheatre.com) or by calling the box office at 507-389-6661 between 4-6 p.m., Monday-Friday. Some additional fees apply.