



## Who Are We?

The Phoenix Players was incorporated as a non-profit corporation in the State of Michigan in September 2005, and shortly thereafter became an IRS designated 501(c)(3)charitable organization organized to bring quality live theatre to audiences in the eastern Livingston County and western Oakland County area. In addition, the group hoped to interest a new generation of theatre aficionados with children's workshops, theatre camps, and productions.



The group was formed by, and continues to be led by, Anne Levy. Anne has advanced degrees in both law and theatre and is a faculty member in the Department of Theatre at Michigan State University and has many years of experience in acting and directing for theatre companies throughout the metropolitan Detroit area. Combining knowledge of both the management and creative side of theatre, Anne has continued to guide the group toward its goal of providing quality live theatre experiences and training for the local community. With her "can do" attitude, Anne has helped the group to overcome a number of obstacles in the four years of its existence, allowing it to continue as a vital part of the area's cultural environment.

After its inception, The Phoenix Players performed in small venues throughout the area until late in 2005 the group found a home at The South Lyon Theatre, a small historic cinema. Planning rehearsals and performances around the showing of movies, in March 2006, the group undertook its first show, *Plaza Suite*, followed quickly by *The Trial of the Big Bad Wolf*, in May of that year.

*The Trial of the Big Bad Wolf* was the first production by the Players newly-formed children's theatre ensemble, The Phire Phlies. The Phire Phlies have become a very popular local group, providing a vibrant and nurturing theatre group for local young people. Giving the children professional level training and theatre expertise, The Phire Phlies have provided a much needed outlet for children's creative talents in a world where the schools can no longer afford to offer the kind of arts experience they need. Consequently, there is always a waiting list to become a member of this elite acting troupe, as parents recognize the value and quality of the skills and sense of accomplishment and self-esteem it provides.



In November 2006, the Players started its first full season of plays, doing *The Unexpected Guest* by Agatha Christie, *The New Adventures of Dorothy in Oz*, a children's show written by a local playwright, and the comedy, *Dilemmas With Dinner*. The second full season began equally as successfully with *Laura Ingalls Wilder: Voice of the*

*Prairie*, a show that featured both the children and adults of the ensemble in a show that appealed especially to families. The second show of that season, *Waking Beauty*, a play written by the group President and director of the children's shows,



Anne Levy, was designed to appeal to children and adults with a cast of children playing well-known storybook characters, show in a whole new light.

Unfortunately, on opening night of *Waking Beauty*, the Players discovered that the heat had been turned off in the South Lyon Theatre and would not be turned back on. In order not to disappoint the children in the cast, the show went on with propane heaters, hand and foot warmers for the performers, and blankets and free hot chocolate for the audience. The Phire Phlies put on an amazing show, despite the temperature, but it soon became clear that this would be the last show at The South Lyon Theatre under the current owner. By April 29, 2008

the theatre had been put into foreclosure and taken back by the bank.

In December 2008, a new owner reopened our theatre venue under the name The Lyon Theatre. The Phoenix Players were given permission to do a children's show, the second one written by Anne Levy, called *Queen Cinderella*, in March 2009 for two weekends. Due to a number of factors including problems with rehearsal space and the problems with a nonprofit theatre company trying to work with a for-profit business, The Players began in 2008 to search for a new theatre space. We found the Green Oak Historical Township Hall and by partnering with the Green Oak Township Historical Society, we were able to renovate it for theatrical use.

We opened our 2009-2010 season in the Township Hall with *Secret Garden*, followed by *Blithe Spirit*, and *Alice in Wonderland*. In Fall 2010, we did a very well received production of *The Canterville Ghost*, followed by an original play written by Artistic Director Anne Levy, *It's So Easy Being Green*, focusing on the need to reduce, reuse, and recycle.



It has not been an easy road since our incorporation, but like the mythical Phoenix, we always rise from adversity. At first, for example, many were unsure that we could take a small hall

and create a useable space for live performances. With innovative staging, lighting, and seating designs and a great deal of "sweat equity" from the members, we overcame every obstacle. While the venue is small compared to that available to some groups, we have created what we think is a good space for the intimate sharing of the joy of theatre. Using minimal sets we place our emphasis on quality of acting, leaving the big extravagant productions to others with space and money to perform them.

We are committed to presenting the types of plays that bring joy to the theatrical soul, not by the largeness of the stage or the set, but by the largeness of the heart with which we present them. We are also committed to training and continual improvement of our skills, which



includes beginning a new Acting Academy in which professionals teach classes to local actors and actresses. The Academy will open this summer with classes for children and teens and will expand to add classes for adults in Fall 2011.

Another way that we are unique is that we do not come together for just one production. While it is possible to be a “guest artist” in one show, most of our members stay with the group, doing many shows with the same people. This allows for a quicker rehearsal schedule and faster advancement of skills, as the sense of being a stage family gives a level of comfort that is often reached only at the end of a production in other groups. In addition, rehearsals are not just “run throughs,” as we choose directors who have the skills to be acting coaches, giving the cast the opportunity for stage training as well as receiving basic direction.

Finally, we often combine children and adults in our shows. This is beneficial for both groups, as the children learn professionalism and skills from the adults and the adults learn to revive their excitement of performance and to see the stage through the freshness of youth.

If you share our mission, we would love to have you join our group in any capacity. Acting requires an audition, but production work is open to anyone. We hope you will find us a theatrical home in which you can share your talents.

