



JAMES GIBBARD/Tulsa World file

Kelsey Griswold and Tom Berenson were in a 2001 production of "Miracle on 34th Street." Theater Tulsa will bring back the play for a December run.

## Reviving the CLASSICS

### Theater Tulsa schedules old favorites for new season

Favorites from the past like "To Kill a Mockingbird" and "A Streetcar Named Desire" mix in with a musical "Miracle on 34th Street" to make up Theater Tulsa's 82nd season of shows.

The oldest community theater west of the Mississippi River presented contemporary works like "Copenhagen" and "I Hate Hamlet" the past couple of seasons to considerable acclaim. Unfortunately, audiences were not as large for these new works as board members had hoped.

The result is a return to some classics "that we know people love and want to see," said Sherri McKean, president of Theater Tulsa. "We picked shows that would appeal to our audience, but that will also challenge our audience."

Five shows make up the coming season package, but the company also plans a December production of "Miracle on 34th Street," a popular musical adaptation by local playwrights Vern Stefanic and Doug Smith that the troupe last staged in 2001.

Theater Tulsa's 2004-05 season includes:

**"To Kill a Mockingbird"** (Sept. 18-19, 23-25) — A thrilling, emotional masterpiece, based on Harper Lee's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel. A lawyer in the Depression-era South must defend a black man who's accused of raping a white woman. As a single parent, he must protect his own children at the same time. Atticus Finch in the role of defender of justice, loving father and hero.

**"Absurd Person Singular"** (Nov. 13-14, 18-20) — Playwright Alan Ayckbourn's hilarious farce about three status-conscious couples who meet on three successive Christmas Eves — resulting in a series of dinner disasters, maddening mishaps and social catastrophes. It's comedy from the master of British humor.

**"A Streetcar Named Desire"** (Feb. 12-13, 17-19) — Stellaaaaaaaa! Tennessee Williams' tale of a faded Southern belle named Blanche DuBois, a fragile and neurotic woman who ignites danger and a passionate explosion after coming to live with her sister and her brutish husband, Stanley Kowalski, the role that first made the late Marlon Brando a star on Broadway.

**"Damn Yankees"** (April 9-10, 14-16) — Baseball, comedy, musical treats and a seductive temptress named Lola! George Abbott's enormously popular musical about a fan who makes a deal with the devil for the chance to help his beloved team win the pennant still hits one out of the park.

**"The Cemetery Club"** (May 28-29, June 2-4) — Three widows discover there's more to life than mourning in this warm comedy about friendship, new romances and learning how to dip when you dance. You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll discover that even the smartest people don't know everything.



on stage

To purchase season tickets or for more information about Theater Tulsa's upcoming season, call 587-8402.

### Open auditions

**Heller Theater** is staging auditions Tuesday night for its October production of the comedy "An Empty Plate in the Cafe du Grand Boeuf."

Auditions are 7 p.m. Tuesday at Heller Theater, 5328 S. Wheeling Ave., and will include cold readings from the script. The company is seeking three men and two women in the age range of 30-50 and one man in his early 20s.

More information about the auditions is available by calling 746-5065.

**Spotlight Children's Theater** auditions for a production of "Doctor Dolittle" are set for 7 p.m. Monday-Tuesday.

Several parts are available for men, women and children in this musical production. Those trying out will be asked to perform cold readings from the script, and all are asked to have a short song prepared to perform.

More information about the audition is available by calling 587-5030.

### See you next year...

This week is your final chance this season to catch the surrey with the fringe on top — dramatically pulled across the stage by live horses — in the production of "Oklahoma!" at Discoveryland.

The national home of Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical favorite offers 8 p.m. performances Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday, while curtain for their partner presentation "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers" is 8 p.m. Thursday-Friday.

Discoveryland opens at 6 p.m. each night, serving ranch dinners with all the fixings, fancy dancing, a Western musical revue and more. The earthen amphitheater is located on West 41st Street about 2 miles west of Oklahoma 97. Tickets are available by calling 245-6552.

### Now on stage

► "Tommy," American Theater Company presents for SummerStage 2004 Pete Townshend's rock opera in its Tony Award-winning incarnation featuring songs by the Who, 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday, also 8 p.m. Aug. 25-28, 2 p.m. Aug. 29 and 8 p.m. Sept. 3-4, Williams Theater of the Tulsa Performing Arts Center, Second Street and Cincinnati Avenue. Tickets may be reserved by calling 596-7111 or online at [www.tulsapac.com](http://www.tulsapac.com).

► "Forever Plaid," Tulsa Repertory Musicals presents the long-running comic tribute to the four-part harmony groups of the '50s and '60s, 8 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday, Doenges Theater of the PAC, Second Street and Cincinnati Avenue. Tickets may be reserved by calling 596-7111 or online at [www.tulsapac.com](http://www.tulsapac.com).

► "Mere Mortals," Heller Theater presents multiple one-act comedies by playwright David Ives for its annual fund-raising event, 8 p.m. Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday, also 8 p.m. Aug. 26-28, Heller Theater, 5328 S. Wheeling Ave. Tickets may be reserved by calling 746-5065.

► "Laughing Matter Improv," 8 p.m. Friday, and "The Improv Experiment," 8 p.m. Saturday, SummerStage 2004 presents Tulsa's top interactive improv comedy troupes in a cabaret setting, Norman Theater of the PAC, Second Street and Cincinnati Avenue. Tickets may be reserved by calling 596-7111 or online at [www.tulsapac.com](http://www.tulsapac.com).

► "My Poems are Too Loud," Deborah J. Hunter's one-woman theatrical show and spoken word performance, 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, Nightingale Theater, 1416 E. Fourth St. Tickets may be reserved by calling 583-8487.

► "Treasure Island," Spotlight Children's Theater presents a slightly different telling and interactive version of Robert Louis Stevenson's story of pirates and lost treasure, 7:30 p.m. Friday, 2 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, Spotlight Theater, 1381 Riverside Drive. Tickets may be reserved by calling 587-5030.

► "Do You Really Want to Hurt Me, Do You Really Want to Kill Me Now," travel back to the '80s with the Ultimate Murder Mystery in this interactive murder mystery featuring Lt. Columbo, 7 p.m. Saturday, Ambassador Hotel. Tickets may be reserved by calling 857-8092.

► "The Drunkard," Spotlight Theater presents the nation's longest currently running play, old-time melodrama comically exposing the evils of drink since 1953, 7:45 p.m. Saturday, 1381 Riverside Drive. Tickets may be reserved by calling 587-5030.

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Rebecca Ungerman performs during her cabaret concert on Friday at the Tulsa PAC.

JAMES GIBBARD/Tulsa World

## 'Indulge Me' offers true cabaret experience

By JAMES D. WATTS JR.  
World Scene Writer

Rebecca Ungerman titled the cabaret concert she presented Friday at the Tulsa Performing Arts Center simply, "Indulge Me."

That title was Ungerman's way of alerting people that this show — the second of two shows she has performed with pianist Sonny Gray as part of the Tulsa Performing Arts Center's SummerStage festival — was not going to feature the sort of jazz, blues and pop songs for which she is known around town.

Instead, she was going to step out a little, perform material that was a little more personal, a little more revealing. In other words, she was going to put on a true cabaret show.

People tend to think of any performance that consists of a lone singer performing in a small room furnished with tables, chair and beverages as a "cabaret show." But true cabaret is as much theater as it is music. It is uniquely intimate, not just because of the setting, but because it offers the artist the chance to share more of his or her personality through the music being performed, through the stories that link the songs together.

In that sense, a true cabaret show can be a kind of musical autobiography. And that's exactly what Ungerman presented Friday night: a show that sketched out her public career and private romances through a collection of classic and original songs.

That may sound, on the surface, like some pretty heavy sledding. But Ungerman, who put the show together with writer P. Casey Morgan, is too much of an entertainer to let things get too lugubrious or self-indulgent — whatever the title of her show might imply. "Indulge Me" turned out to be a sparkling evening of song, filled with some genuine surprises even for those who have followed Ungerman's career from the start.

She started out with the Gershwins' "Little Jazz Bird," then set the confessional tone of the evening with a version of Noel Coward's "(Don't Put Your Daughter on the Stage) Mrs. Worthington," changing the name of the lady in question to "Mrs. Ungerman."

Ungerman paid tribute to her first public performance at an Elks Lodge meeting when she was 11 years old, by singing a medley of songs made famous by Al Jolson. ("Eleven years old, in drag, singing about girls," Ungerman said of that time. "And they say you don't know when you're a kid.")

It's rare these days to hear anyone do Jolson songs. It's rarer still to hear someone sing "My Mammy" as anything other than a joke (as it is, for example, in the musical "Thoroughly Modern Millie"). But it is a most effecting, emotional song when it's performed with the conviction and power that Ungerman gave it. Later on in the show, Ungerman talked about the death of her mother, but the audience had already felt all the emotions of that loss in the way she sang this well-known song.

She touched on the 10-year period when her music career consisted of doing cover songs in local dives, for which Ungerman strapped on a guitar and strummed through "Me & Bobby McGee," "Moondance" and a rewritten "No Particular Place to Go," the old Chuck Berry chestnut. She gave a nod to her time in the band Blue Combo with a sassy rendition of the double-entendre laden "I Want a Little Sugar in My Bowl."

Ungerman included three original songs that marked three very important phases of one romance — "I'm Always Falling in Love," "You're the Face" and "Ready for the Next Step Now," this last song written with Steve Elmore.

Each of them showed that Ungerman can do more than get every nuance out of a lyric; she also is capable of putting a lot INTO a lyric. Her songs were witty and concise, poetic and still conversational, personal without being maudlin.

But then, Ungerman never let the mood get too introspective for long. For example, she sandwiched what she called "the scariest song in the show," the confessional "Ready for the Next Step Now" with a couple of classic anti-love songs — Rodgers and Hart's comically cynical take on the list-song, "Everything I've Got," and "Down with Love" by Harold Arlen and E.Y. Harburg.

She even included a surprise duet, with John Sawyer singing the opening lines to "Peel Me a Grape" from the audience, before joining Ungerman on the stage area of the PAC's Charles Norman Theater.

Pianist Gray was, as always, the perfect accompanist — never obtrusive, never fading into the background, always in perfect sync with Ungerman's vocals.

Both Ungerman's July 9 concert and the show this past Friday were recorded and will be released later this year as a live CD. And that is welcome news. Tulsa has long had a tendency to dismiss performers who remain here as somehow being "not good enough." Well, these concerts, and the disc that will come from them, will be testimony enough to debunk that stereotype.

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### box office

AUG. 13-15

All numbers are in millions of dollars

Alien vs. Predator.....	\$38.3
Princess Diaries 2.....	\$23.0
Collateral.....	\$16.0
Yu-Gi-Oh! The Movie.....	\$9.4
The Bourne Supremacy.....	\$8.3
The Village.....	\$7.0
The Manchurian Candidate.....	\$6.0
Little Black Book.....	\$3.7
I, Robot.....	\$3.6
Spider-Man 2.....	\$3.4