

Fox Riverside Live

March 2011

Volume II Issue I: Broadway wows the Fox

Looking for *The Color Purple* with Taprena Augustine

By Anne Marie Acosta

It's about life. It's about love. It's about us. The inspiring and soul-stirring Broadway musical, *The Color Purple*, made its mark at the Fox Performing Arts Center on the weekend of October 29, 2010.

Alice Walker's novel turned Broadway musical has become an on-stage phenomenon that fully embraces the message of hope and love through its vibrant music, its touching lyrics, its toe-tapping choreography and especially its amazing and dynamic cast. The Fox Foundation was given the opportunity to sit down with Taprena Augustine, who played the vivacious Shug Avery and talk about her part in this inspiring show.

Augustine told us that she is glad to be in such a beautiful theater with a very warm and welcoming feeling. She praised the audiences saying, "The audience reception is beautiful. The audience makes us want to be better at every performance."

She described Shug as a complicated character. According to Augustine, Shug is "a singer with baggage and history," but she loves bringing her to life every night. Her favorite part of the show is the juke joint scene. "Juke is a performance in a performance. It's such a fun part!"

Augustine continued to tell us that playing Shug in this momentous story is a "legendary" marker in her life. She looks forward to sharing her experiences and stories with her future children and grandchildren, knowing that the message of *The Color Purple* is bound to touch generations to come.

"This story is about love. Anything is possible. Miracles are possible, even though they may not happen when you want them to. Keep believing. That's the key to survival."



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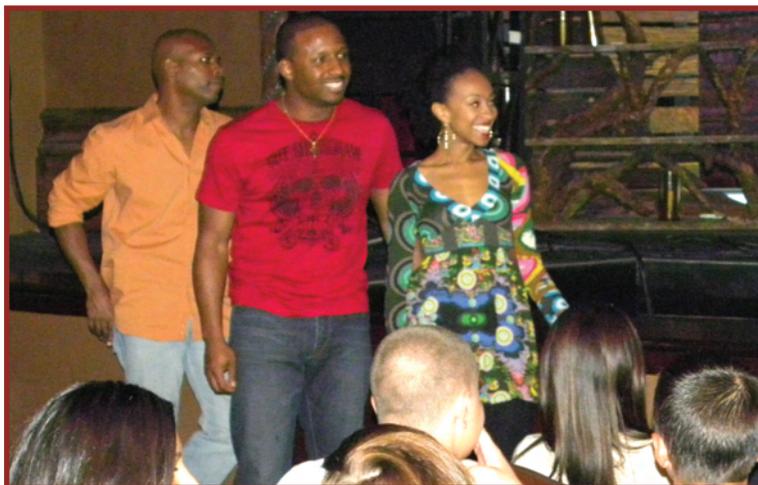
Students meet the cast of *The Color Purple*

By Anne Marie Acosta

As part of the Fox Foundation's education outreach program sponsored by Target; students of theater, dance and music from Ramona High School came to the Fox Performing Arts Center on October 30 to watch the show and afterwards had a private Q & A session with some of the cast members. All the students were enthusiastic to meet the cast members and as Lee Colston (Harpo), Allison Semmes (Squeak) and Mark Hall (Pa/Ensemble) walked into the room, the students gave them a standing ovation.

The three cast members shared very valuable stories and information to the aspiring performers sitting attentively in their seats. Semmes told the students that she started out as high school student participating in show choir and drama club just like them. She went on to participate in community theater and eventually got her Masters in Musical Theater at NYU.

Similarly, both Colston and Hall shared their experiences in community theater. They also talked about the audition, rehearsal and touring process. Colston advised the students to always be prepared when going to an audition because you never know what they might throw at you. In his case, he was called



back six times before getting the part. "You've got to get ready," he says.

Each of the cast members have grown very attached to the story. "The play has to become something new every time you do it," says Hall. He also told the students that being in the ensemble is just as important as playing a main character. The ensemble constantly works with the entire cast to create relationships and to set the mood so everything on stage is believable to the audience.

The Q & A session ended with the cast members thanking and praising the students for being a very receptive and enthusiastic audience saying, "We owe it [to you] to do the best."



The Fox Foundation honors our troops

By Pamela Hogan

On Nov. 27, 2010, the Fox Foundation presented the 82nd Airborne All-American Chorus at the Fox Performing Arts Center. Thanks to the generous help of our sponsors, the tickets were just \$5 a seat and over 800 complimentary tickets were donated to military and veteran families. Members of every branch of service were represented in the audience. All were treated to patriotic songs and much more from this talented group with a great sense of humor. One hundred people took advantage of the VIP Experience in the Tower Room at the Fox where they met the Chorus and enjoyed refreshments before the concert. Plans are being made to make this an annual Veteran's Day event in Riverside. Watch the e-newsletter for news about upcoming events and more information.

A One-on-one with Thomas DeMarcus

By Anne Marie Acosta

King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table ruled the Fox Performing Arts Center stage January 28-30, 2011, in the Broadway in Riverside presentation of *Monty Python's Spamalot*. The Fox Foundation sat down with one of the enthusiastic cast members to chat a bit about his role, his career and his dreams.

Thomas DeMarcus has been in multiple national tours including *The Pajama Game*, *Iowa '08*, *Eggs* and *For the Love of Miss Bishop*. Other credits include *How to Succeed*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Glass Menagerie* and the short film "Gravy Train".

★ ★ ★

Fox Foundation: Thank you for taking the time to talk to us. What role do you play in *Spamalot*?

Thomas DeMarcus: Of course, it's my pleasure. I play several: the historian at the start of the play, one of Sir Robin's minstrels, Brother Maynard who blesses the hand grenade, and also one of the taunting French guards.

FF: Were you a big Monty Python fan before joining the cast?

TD: Yes! My parents were big Monty Python fans. They exposed me to great comedy growing up like Abbott and Costello, the Three Stooges, and the *Carol Burnett Show*. I remember when I saw *Spamalot* on the Tonys, I thought to myself, "What a perfect show. One day, I'll be in it!"

FF: How did you get into acting?

TD: I didn't get into acting until my college career. I was planning to be a Math teacher.

FF: How do you like the tour life?

TD: It's great. You have to get used to sleeping on a bus and get along with everyone on the tour. Fortunately everyone is really nice. It gets you out of the city too. I mean, New York right now is covered in snow!

FF: We saw the show last night and we thoroughly enjoyed it.

TD: Last night was so great! The theater is beautiful! We've done this 125 times and it still amazes me how full

the houses are. Audiences always respond so positively. Even if someone hasn't seen Monty Python, they already know some of the lines and the gags. I love it when people are laughing and clapping before we deliver the punch lines.

FF: The transition from film to stage is amazing. I couldn't wait to see what you did with the cow!

TD: Some nights that cow comes down a little slower than usual. It takes two people with a blanket to hoist that cow over our heads and the castle wall. Sometimes it lands right on us, so then we are on our backs trying to

throw this 50-pound cow onto the guys below. We have to be ready to improvise. Sometimes the Black Knight's arm comes off before the sword hits him. Oops!

FF: How long is your tour?

TD: This tour runs until the end of June, so we'll make about 245 performances. There's a strong possibility it will go out a second year.

FF: Is there any down time for you to go home or visit family?

TD: No, I really do miss home and my parents, but we are going to hit Tennessee, where they live, so I'm excited my parents will get to see the show and get to visit. But there really isn't a weekend or week off that we can just go home and relax.

FF: So, using the terms of the show, what is your personal "Holy Grail" and have you found it?

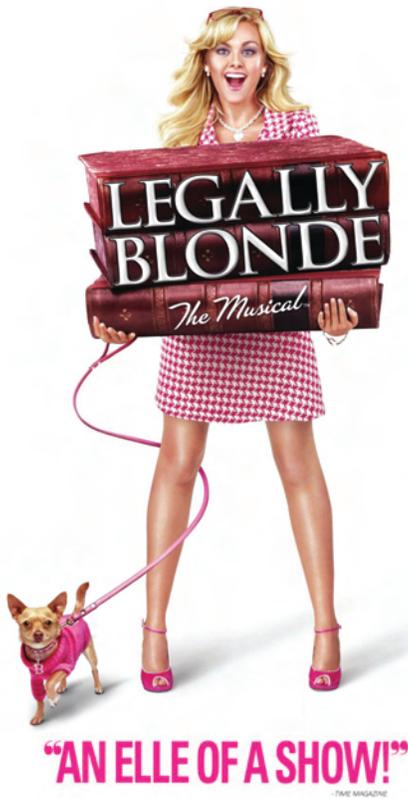
TD: I would say yes, I have found my holy grail in acting and making a living at it. But if I had to choose a long-term Holy Grail... I've always wanted to host the Oscars. And when I was in college, I said that I wanted to host the 100th Academy Awards Show. So that would be it, because if I were to do that, it would mean I have already had a great acting career.

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We will be watching for our favorite multitasking *Spamalot* cast member, Thomas DeMarcus, as the host of the 2028 Oscars! He was a big hit on stage at the Fox.



Don't miss Broadway in Riverside's next presentation...



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Click Enter. *Please note once you enter in the code you'll be asked to log into your account. If you don't have one you'll need to register.*

Enjoy!

March 18-20, 2011

5 performances only at the Fox Performing Arts Center

3801 Mission Inn Avenue, Riverside, CA 9250

Fox Box Office: (951) 779-9800

Broadway in Riverside: (951) 684-2929

Although specific seat locations cannot be identified in advance you will automatically be assigned to the best seats within the theatre section purchased. Best efforts will be made to honor any additional seating request, but cannot be guaranteed.

Please email: onlinegrouptix@broadwayinriverside.com with any questions!

City grant funds exhibit of Fox Theater photographs

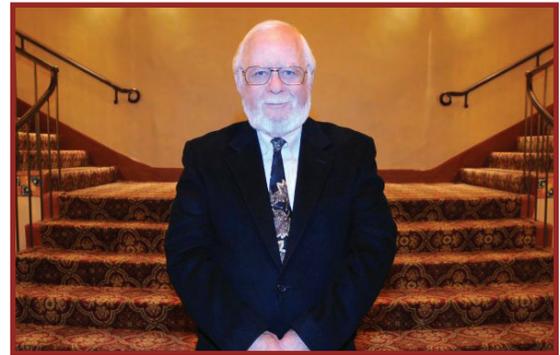
By Michael J. Elderman

The City of Riverside Development Department generously sponsored a grant to Riverside Art Museum to display my Fox Theater images at two more venues to engage a wider audience. The first venue was the beautiful new Orange Terrace Library in Orangecrest. The exhibit ran from May - December 2010. The Stratton Center exhibit at Bordwell Park on Riverside's Eastside ran through January 2011.

The photographs are, with one exception, from my book, "Riverside's Fox Theater: An Intimate Portrait." published December 2010. The book not only documents the \$32M physical renovation of the theater, but also includes a large section of abstract art images which came out of the project. In both black and white and color, the art photos use texture, light and shadow, and composition to portray the theater's transformation.

Two previous exhibits in Riverside were arranged by Marion Mitchell-Wilson and Alaska Whelan. A small exhibit of 12 pieces in early 2008 and another which included photographs from the Pomona Fox Theater and construction images from the UC Riverside Culver Center of the Arts, was mounted at the Victor Miceli Law Library.

To launch the book Béatriz Mejia-Krumbein, Chair of the La Sierra University Art Department, very generously coordinated two more exhibits, the first, at the Brandstater Gallery at La Sierra University from November 9 to December 10, 2009, which emphasized both the creation of the book and the theater's



reconstruction. It included matted and framed images and flush-mounted panoramas of the more dramatic construction vistas. Then at RAM, a second exhibit emphasized the more artistic images. The work has been on display constantly at my gallery, Division 9 Gallery on Lemon Street, where I do commercial photography such as portraits, headshots, and advertising.

Thus, the City has shown its generosity towards my Fox Theater project on two levels: first, they granted me access to the theater over the five-year period of its redevelopment; and second, they supported this grant which got the documentary and art work out to be displayed at two buildings, in two very different population centers of Riverside.

I have photographed at the Fox since it reopened and have also done some work at the planned Fox Entertainment Plaza. I sell the book, along with Fox tee shirts, magnets, photocards, and postcards at almost every performance at the theater. Look for my display table either in the lobby or in the Preview Bar.

Written and produced by:

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 Riverside, California

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 RiversideFoxFoundation.org

Photo credits: Scott Suchman
 and Michael J. Elderman

Upcoming Events:

Family Fun Day
 Sunday, March 6 • 1 - 4 p.m.
Activities for the whole family!

Pooch Pageant & Bend n' Snap Contest
 Saturday, March 12 • 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.



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Call 951-826-5769, or email Pamela Hogan at foxfoundation@riversideca.gov to charge your participation.

The Fox Riverside Theater Foundation (Tax ID # 26-0698976) is the charitable organization whose mission is to advance the efforts of the Fox Performing Arts Center to serve and enhance the City of Riverside, its residents, artists, art enthusiasts and the Downtown by providing a first class regional facility offering a wide range of professional and community-based performing arts.

Visit www.riversidefoxfoundation.org for more details.