

October 22, 2008

Dear Friends of Gunn Theatre!

I hope this finds you doing very well indeed. I wanted to bring you up to date on some exciting things going on here at Gunn Theatre, and let you know (or remind you) about a great way to support the Theatre department, and leave a lasting legacy in our own little Studio Theatre.

We continue to create theatre of which I'm really proud. Last year we had such fun with our fall show *Scapino*, and in the spring mounted a beautiful production of Shakespeare's "The Winter's Tale," a play I had always dreamed of directing. We are just getting going this year with a new production of Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *The Visit*, a magnificent tragi-comedy exploring materialism and contemporary values which we produced once before at Gunn in 1992, this time set in 30's dustbowl Kansas. It's going to be a disturbing/thrilling show which I hope you will consider seeing. (The Opening Night Gala is November 13th, tix on sale now at <http://www.gunntheatre.org!>)

We've also had some exciting news regarding some very tangible district support of the Theatre program. After many years of a shaky and iffy stage, the district has just finished completely rebuilding the Studio Theatre stage floor, which now feels so solid and well-constructed I can hardly believe it! At the same time they have laid down an entirely new hardwood floor in the stage shop. No more stepping through or tripping on splintering floorboards! It looks truly amazing, and I am so excited to get going on this year's fall show... Many thanks to the district for supporting us so substantially. Which brings me to the next big thing...

I want to encourage you to be a part of our biggest Theatre Booster project yet: The Studio Theatre Seat Renewal Campaign! A bit of history: 16 years ago three intrepid young men (Alexi Zeller, Jordan Allen-Dutton, Brian Flegel) and I drove across the Central Valley in Palo Alto District Truck number 77 and spent all night loading heavy seats from an old movie house in the Sierra foothills slated for demolition. The seats were free, and in pretty good shape: solid steel, classic American Theatre Seating vintage models. We lugged back more than one hundred, and over the next weeks got them installed in the Studio Theatre. They were wonderful, considering the price, however they were never installed the way they should have been, and the covering and padding is aging in a not-quite-graceful manner...

We are now taking a deep breath, forging ahead and addressing our needs: WE MUST FIX AND RESTORE THE STUDIO THEATRE SEATS! We have embarked on a very exciting project: we will reupholster and restore to better than original quality our classic theatre seats, as well as increasing the total number in the theatre to 125! This is obviously a huge operation. The seating engineers will sand, grind and chip the seats down to bare metal, repaint them lovingly, replace all broken and missing parts as well as renew all padding and upholstery, restore the maple armrests, and install them firmly and properly in the concrete floor. These redone seats will easily last another 25 years without further attention. If you have ever sat on one of the folding chairs in the aisles, never again! Let us all rejoice in the additional seating! *If you are one of the wonderful Theatre Supporters who have already named a seat or seats, thank you all for your zeal and generosity in getting our campaign rolling! For the rest....*

You can of course be a part of this amazing project. For \$300 you can name one of the beautifully restored seats: an engraved donor plate on the maple armrest will honor your family, alum, or any individual or group you so designate. (Just in case you are feeling even more generous, donations of more than one seat will also be honored on a lovely lighted wall plaque in rear of the Studio Theatre.) The total for the job (\$37,500, if we schedule work by the end of 2008) includes all work and installation, and we are highly confident in the reputable seating company we have contracted for the work.

It's fabulous that we have ALREADY SOLD 77 seats (!), but that means there are only 48 seats remaining for you to claim with your name! I would be so grateful if you would consider helping us reach our goal of making the Studio Theatre a finished space where students can continue to create, dream and inspire audiences, by donating a seat and putting your name on it. Thanks for reading this far, and I hope to see you at the theatre very soon. All information about shows, the seat campaign, and everything else we're up to can be found at <http://www.gunntheatre.org>.

With gratitude and affection,

Jim Shelby

P.S. If you know of anyone who might appreciate hearing about this opportunity, please feel free to forward it on to them. We are grateful for as much spreading of the word as possible. --JS

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**Yes, I'd like to support the Gunn Studio Theatre Seat Renewal Campaign with a donation!!**

I have enclosed a check to "name" \_\_\_\_\_ seat(s) at \$300 each = Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I cannot contribute as much as \$300, but would like to donate \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the Seat Renewal Campaign.

(Donations of any amount are much appreciated and fully tax deductible. Please make checks payable to: **Gunn Theatre Boosters**)

My company, \_\_\_\_\_, may offer to contribute matching funds. Contact me about this possibility.

My Name \_\_\_\_\_ (email or phone) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail donations to:** Gunn Theatre Boosters; 780 Arastradero Rd.; Palo Alto, CA 94306

You will be contacted by Theatre Booster President, Amy Christel, with information about the project timeline and your donor plaque inscription (1 plaque/\$300 donation). Gunn Theatre Boosters is a 501(c)3 organization, ID # 26-1717567. **Questions?** Call Booster President Amy Christel at (650) 852-9959 or email [amychristel@stanfordalumni.org](mailto:amychristel@stanfordalumni.org).