

GILLETTE COMMUNITY THEATRE PRESENTS

ARSENIC

AND

*Old Face*

BY JOSEPH KESSERLING

ASSISTANT DIRECTED BY  
STEPHANIE OELLRICH

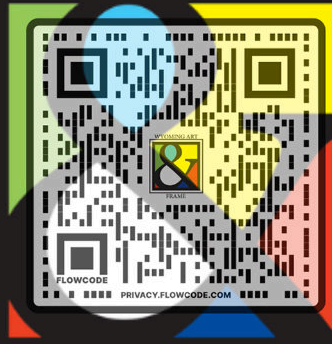
PERFORMING AT  
ARTS & CELEBRATIONS BY THE CREEK  
2051 E SINCLAIR DRIVE

DIRECTED BY  
DONNA FISHER



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# WYOMING ART



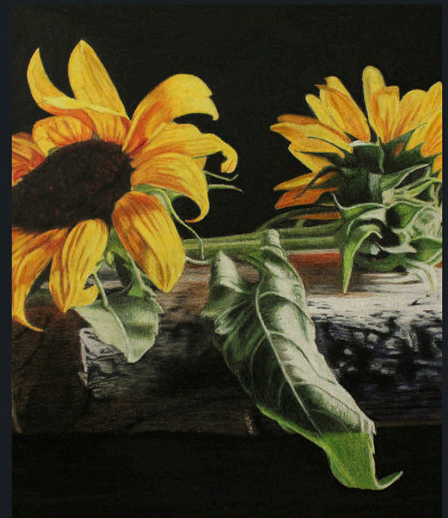
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## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Arsenic and Old Lace is a classic 1940's play. Lots of references are made about WWII, Teddy Roosevelt, Hitler, electric lighting, and some things we now, take for granted. This show mostly takes place in candlelight, because Abby and Martha don't like electricity. Their nephew, Mortimer, had it installed for them, but it is not used much.

It has been so wonderful working with this dedicated cast! Since I live in Casper, our rehearsal schedule was different than it is normally. Because we rehearsed on weekends, lots of the cast had to work. Perfectly understandable, but it was a bit of a struggle. The cast adapted very well. I had set a date to be memorized, and it was met. That's a first! Hours and hours were spent memorizing, rehearsing, building and painting the set walls, putting up the lighting and sound, gathering props, and marketing, and it was all a huge effort and everyone came together as a team and got it done! It has been an honor working with this cast. Gillette should be very proud!

*Donna Fisher*

Donna Fisher, Artistic Director  
Casper Theater Company



## SPECIAL THANKS

Bringing a classic Broadway play to the wonderful community of Gillette is no easy task; it takes a lot of teamwork and dedication of the cast and crew, as well as their families, employers, and community leaders to bring it all together. We would like to thank Angela of Arts & Celebrations by the Creek for the use of this wonderful venue, Tim and Sarah Bissette for their bodies of work, Rusty and Andee Steiner for their dedication to cast safety and set building skills, Sherry and associates for Teddy's pince-nez glasses, Craig Vending for the donation of popcorn, bags, and popping machine, Levi & Lindee Strandgard, Johanna Cryer, Johnathan Borrego, Alex Olson, Stephanie Oellrich, and Aiden for their time and hard work bringing the director's vision to life, and KayCee for her amazing prop mastery skills. We'd also like to thank Bear's Dry Cleaning for assisting us with costume cleaning needs, Kasie Wanke of La Quinta Inn & Suites for the director's amazing accommodations, Wyoming Art & Frame for the framing of our legacy painting, and all of our sponsors for believing in us enough by investing in our programs. Finally, thank YOU to our amazing audience, we couldn't do this without your continued support and patronage. Please enjoy the show!

**EAST**  
*(in order of appearance)*

|                           |                 |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| ABBY BREWSTER .....       | AnDee Steiner   |
| THE REV. DR. HARPER ..... | Bud Miller      |
| TEDDY BREWSTER .....      | Doug Frost      |
| OFFICER BROPHY.....       | Joe Keever      |
| OFFICER KLEIN .....       | Jordan Engdahl  |
| MARTHA BREWSTER .....     | Charla Carlson  |
| ELAINE HARPER .....       | Salena Loveland |
| MORTIMER BREWSTER.....    | Alex Olson      |
| MR. GIBBS .....           | Eric Finn       |
| JOHNATHAN BREWSTER .....  | Mike Conway     |
| DR. EINSTEIN.....         | Jude Dodd       |
| OFFICER O'HARA.....       | Monty Holdeman  |
| LIEUTENANT ROONEY.....    | Bud Miller      |
| MR. WITHERSPOON .....     | Eric Finn       |

**SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

The entire action of the play takes place in the living room of the Brewster home in Brooklyn.

**ACT I**

An afternoon in September, 1941

**ACT II**

That same night.

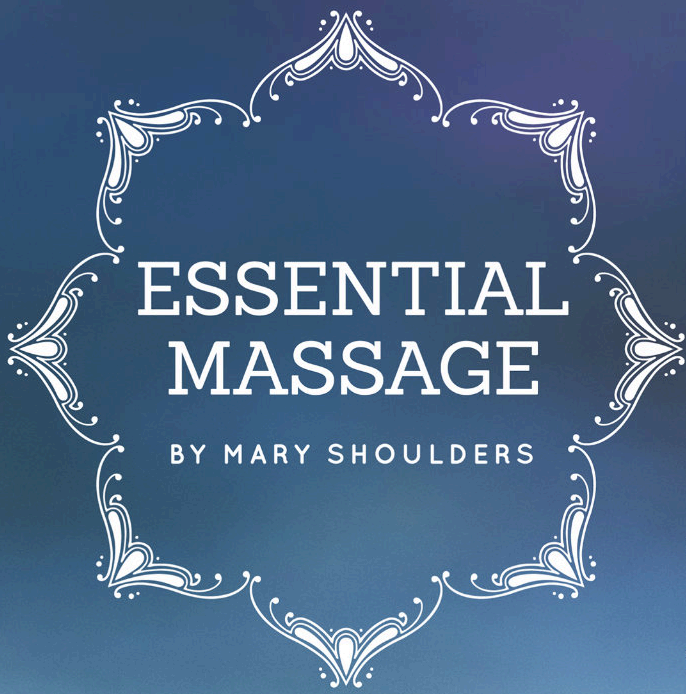
**ACT III**

Scene 1: Later that night.

Scene 2: Early the next morning.

*There will be an intermission between Act I and II*





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## WHO'S WHO IN THE EAST

**ANDEE STEINER** AnDee Steiner has played a wide range of characters for Gillette Community Theater. Abby has been so much fun to be. She would especially like to thank her husband Rusty for all his support. And finally he can quit worrying about what he's drinking.

**CHARLA CARLSON** Charla and her family have been involved in every aspect of community theater from directing to cleaning the toilets since 1980. She has been with Gillette Community Theatre since she moved to Gillette 23 years ago. Charla received a B.A. in Theater and Dance, majoring in performance, from the University of Wyoming. You may remember seeing her in GCT's production of "Southern Fried Funeral" and in many other GCT productions. Charla has enjoyed getting to know the cast and crew of "Arsenic and Old Lace". What fun!

**DOUG FROST** Gillette Community Theaters production of Arsenic and Old Lace marks Doug Frost's sixth appearance in a GCT play. Doug will be playing the part of Teddy Brewster, a character whose intelligence, wit and leadership are matched only by his utter delusions of grandeur. Doug credits interesting characters, the inspiration of talented cast members, but most of all the amazing audiences in Gillette as the reason for him returning time after time to the stage.

**BUD MILLER** Bud Miller has been acting with GCT for eight years. He's been in many productions such as: Blues Clues the Musical, The Dastardly Dr. Devereux, and more recently; It's Wonderful Life, the live radio play. The chemistry between him and his fellow actors and directors is what motivates him to be more involved with theater. Bud hopes that everyone enjoys the show!

**ALEX OLSON** Alex Olson is a local pharmacist who is back for his third show with GCT. You may recognize him as Dr. Montague in the Haunting of Hill House or Harry Heartstone/Snipe Gulch. When he is not performing Alex likes to spend time with his cat, Binx, who is featured in this playbill. He will be directing *The Great Ice Cream Scheme* this summer.

**SALENA LOVELAND** Salena Loveland is a Wyoming native who has been performing in University and community theater for more than eight years. She has been with Gillette Community Theatre since November 2022. Her GCT roles include Mrs. White in *Clue on Stage* and Eleanor in *The Haunting of Hill House*. One of the roles she is most proud of is that of Zelda Kahn in the full-length, two-person play *The How and the Why*. *Arsenic and Old Lace* has always been a favorite of Salena's and she is excited to be a part of this production and bring Elaine to life for you.

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**RAILYARD**



# WHO'S WHO IN THE EAST

**MIKE CONWAY** Mike Conway has had acting in his blood his whole life. He dabbled a little bit in high school culminating in his debut in *Go Ask Alice* - in a role with only five lines. Also, a professionally trained voice actor, Mike hasn't really been able to apply his skills too much, until he returned to Gillette, in 2010 following his father's death, where he was cast for Gillette Community Theaters Radar Riley in the stage version of *M\*A\*S\*H*. Since then, it's been in several GCT productions including *An Evening of Culture*, *The Addams Family Musical*, *Drinking Habits Parts one and two*, and was the dashing leading man in *Martin and Margaret* and the *MINDSWAP*. Last year, Mike acted as assistant director for *Clue*. Mike also has his own Youtube channel where he makes small films and portrays the superhero Super C.

**JUDE DODD** Jude Dodd has been with GCT for over seven years and has loved nearly every minute of it. Jude began with assistant directing *M\*A\*S\*H*, quickly moved to directing *Margaret and the MINDSWAP*, and has acted or directed in many plays and melodramas since. He loves being Dr. Einstein in this classic 80+ year old Broadway play that still entertains and brings the laughs. When not acting or directing, Jude enjoys his creative passions, whether it be knitting, crochet, weaving, playing an instrument, and his laser etching and design.

**STEPHANIE OELLRICH** Stephanie Oellrich is excited to be a part of another production with Gillette Community Theatre. This is her first time working behind the scenes as an assistant director and learning many new recipes for making the most delicious show for the audience. She has found out it only takes a few teaspoons full of a few ingredients, such as a great cast and crew, and just a pinch of chaos all mixed with a great venue. She hopes the audience will enjoy all the hard work all the cast and crew have put into making *Arsenic and Old Lace*.

**JOE KEEVER** Joe Kever has been doing plays with Gillette Community Theatre since 2016. This will be his sixth play. Everyone he works with is amazing and he enjoys all the time that he has spent with the cast.

**JORDAN ENGDAHL** Jordan Engdahl was born and raised here in Gillette. This is her second production with GCT. Both involving murder, so take that as you will. Like officer Klein she can be found spending time with her Pomeranian and cursing the children who walk on her lawn.

**MONTGOMERY HOLDEMAN** This Montgomery Holdeman's second stage performance after a four-year hiatus. He's participated in GCT roles since 2016's production *M\*A\*S\*H*, and while studying theatre at Sheridan College, ran lighting and sound for *Alibis* (2018) and *Murder's in the Heir* (2019). His most recent role with GCT was as Arthur Parker in *The Haunting of Hill House* (2023). While not on stage or backstage, you can find him singing at various open mic venues, or running expo in the show kitchen at Pizza Carrello.

**ERIC FINN** Eric Finn is rejoining Gillette Community Theater after a few year hiatus due to bringing a new human into the world during the pandemic, his son Ronin. He last appeared with the theater in the role of Atticus in *Southern Fried Funeral*. Eric moved to Gillette from Ohio to be with his amazing wife Miranda whom he met while attending Marietta College in Marietta, Ohio. After a small role in *The Worst High School Play in the World* as the black knight due to him being able to lift the lead over his shoulder, Eric took his talents to college to major in Radio and TV Production while competing in football and track and field. After short stints in New England (Vermont, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire), he took his talents back to Ohio and finally settled in Wyoming, where he has lived happily for the last six years. While living out in the Wild West, Eric has been an elementary school teacher, high school football and wrestling coach, and now an early interventionist with Children's Developmental Services. He hopes his current performances are to die for. Please enjoy the show!





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# ABOUT JOSEPH KESSELRING

**JOSEPH OTTO KESSELRING** (July 21, 1902 – November 5, 1967) was an American playwright known best for *Arsenic and Old Lace*, a hit on Broadway from 1939 to 1944 and other countries as well. He was born in New York City to Henry and Frances Kesselring. His father's parents were immigrants from Germany. His mother was an English Canadian.[1] Kesselring spent much of his life in and around the theater. In 1922 he began teaching vocal music and directed stage productions at Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas a Mennonite school. After two years, Kesselring left teaching and returned to the stage, working for two years with an amateur theatrical group in Niagara, New York.[2] He began working as a freelance playwright in 1933, completing 12 original plays, of which four were produced on Broadway: *There's Wisdom in Women* (1935), *Arsenic and Old Lace* (1939), *Four Twelves are 48* (1951), and *Mother of that Wisdom* (1963). "*Arsenic and Old Lace*" was his masterpiece. It ran for 1444 performances on Broadway and 1337 performances in London, and became a staple on the high school and dinner theater circuits. The movie version released in 1944 was also a comedy hit.



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## PLAY FACTS

Arsenic and Old Lace premiered on Broadway in the Fulton Theatre on January 10, 1941. The play starred character actors Josephine Hull, Jean Adair, and horror film star Boris Karloff. It closed on June 17, 1944.

In 1944, director Frank Capra made Arsenic and Old Lace into a highly successful film starring Carey Grant and Priscilla Lane. The script was adapted by brothers Julius and Phillip Epstein.

The movie was actually filmed in 1941, however, it was not released until the play ended its run on Broadway 3 years later.

*Placing the story of Arsenic and Old Lace shortly before the holiday season is a significant theme in that Abby and Martha do not want their family-less tenants to spend the holidays alone.*

The title Arsenic and Old Lace comes from the term **Lavender and Old Lace**; a phrase used during the Victorian era to describe the homes of genteel ladies that were decorated with lace curtains, lace dollies, and smelled of lavender.

The original version of Kesselring's play was a melodrama/ horror entitled *Bodies in our Cellar*. Broadway producers Howard Lindsey and Russel Crouse read the script and thought it would work better as a comedy. Before putting it on the Broadway stage, the producers reworked the script, and they changed the title to Arsenic and Old Lace.

The story line for Arsenic and Old Lace may have been inspired by a series of actual murders that occurred in Windsor, Connecticut in the early 1900's. Amy Archer-Gilligan ran a home for octogenarians who stayed in her care until their deaths. Gilligan was believed to have poisoned over 40 people renting rooms in her boarding house.

The story line for Arsenic and Old Lace reared its head again when Sacramento, California landlady Dorothea Puente was arrested in 1988 for the murder of nine of her boarding house roomers. Puente, who was known for her cooking, published a cookbook entitled *Cooking With a Serial Killer* while she was incarcerated at Central California Women's Facility.

*Kesselring suggests that the theatre reflects life only in absurd situations. As a critic, Mortimer blames the theatre for not being realistic enough. Ironically, Mortimer fails to realize that the situation he is in is more absurd than the plays he reviews.*



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## PLAY REFERENCES

**Judith Anderson:** An older English actress who at the time starred as the creepy housekeeper in the movie *Rebecca* and was known for her black lace gowns.

**Burns Mantle:** A theatre critic who wrote for the *Daily News* and edited the *Best Plays* series for years.

**Murder Will Out:** Another Kesselring play that was regularly savaged by the critics!

**Boris Karloff:** A well known actor best known for playing Frankenstein's monster in 1931 - is considered to be one of the original great actors of the Horror film genre.

**Strindberg:** A Swedish novelist and dramatist who wrote plays that combined psychology and Naturalism.

**Hellzapoppin:** A Broadway slapstick comedy later made into a movie.

**Woodrow Wilson:** an American statesman and academic who served as the 28th President of the United States from 1913 to 1921.

**Teddy Roosevelt:** 26th president of the United States from 1901-1908.

**General Goethals:** The primary engineer of the Panama Canal.

**Culebra Cut:** A man-made valley that cuts through the continental divide in Panama connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

**Thoreau:** 19th century author who believed in the human split over materialism and social conformity.

**Pirandello:** Italian novelist and playwright who wrote *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.

**Cardinal Gibbons:** An American cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1917, Roosevelt hailed him as the most respected and useful citizen in America. He was an advocate for protection of labor at the turn of the century.

**Mayor LaGuardia:** Mayor of New York from 1934-1945.



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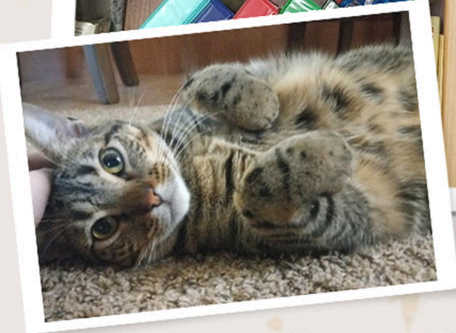
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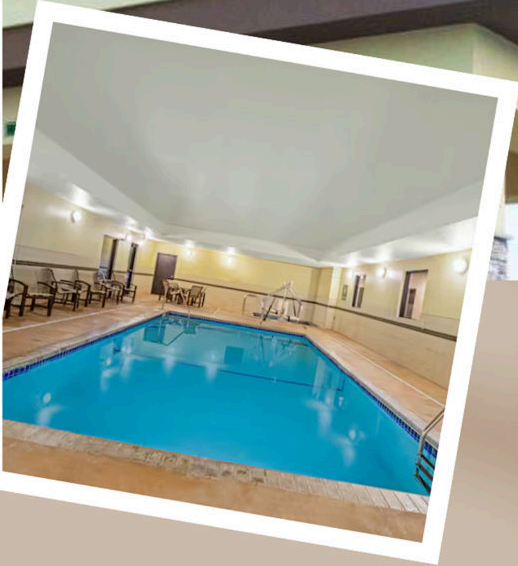
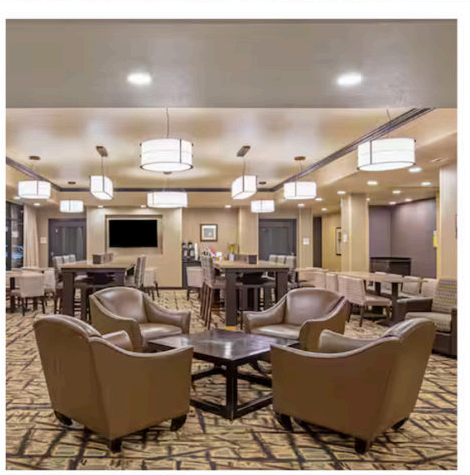
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