

## Northfield Bank Foundation Funds Playwriting Residencies

UNION—Premiere Stages, the professional theatre company in residence at Kean University, announced two new playwriting residencies in Rahway. Funding from the Northfield Bank Foundation has enabled Premiere Stages to return to Rahway a seventh and eighth grade academy in-school playwriting residency. The foundation will also fund a second residency with sixth grade students at Rahway's Roosevelt Elementary School.

Premiere Stages' residencies are specifically designed to support classroom learning objectives and are designed to support the Common Core Curriculum, reinforcing literacy skills, encouraging creativity and collaboration, and bolstering student self-esteem.

Professional teaching artists work closely with classroom teachers to specifically tailor each residency to the needs of the students. The upcoming seventh grade residency will align with the Literary Arts class studying Agatha Christie's masterful whodunit, "And Then There Were None," while the sixth grade program at Roosevelt will center on the social studies unit studying Ancient Egypt.

Over the course of seven weeks, students will learn the basics of playwriting and collaborate to write original short works for the stage. Both residencies will culminate in late March with an in-school presentation of student-written work by a cast of professional actors.

"We are thrilled that the Northfield Bank Foundation is sponsoring our return to Rahway," said Premiere Stages Producing Associate Clare Drobot. "Increased funding will afford Premiere the opportunity to place teaching artists in multiple schools, expanding the pool of students served through the project."

The residencies are just one facet of Premiere's larger educational ini-

tiative, known as the Play Factory. Play Factory programming also includes the New Jersey Young Playwrights Festival, a statewide contest in partnership with Playwrights Theatre of New Jersey that showcases the work of New Jersey students ages 8 and up, and the Play Factory Performance Series, an annual summer performance series featuring dynamic, professional theatre presentations designed specifically for young audiences.

Premiere Stages is made possible in part through funding from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, The Shubert Foundation, The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, The Northfield Bank Foundation, The New Jersey Historical Commission, The Provident Bank Foundation, The Hudson City Savings Bank Foundation, Union County HEART Grants, The Hyde and Watson Foundation, The Union Foundation, E.J. Grassmann Trust, The New Jersey Theatre Alliance and through the generous support of individual patrons. Discover Jersey Arts is our marketing partner. Visit [www.JerseyArts.com](http://www.JerseyArts.com) for more information about other arts programming happening around the Garden State.

Premiere Stages offers affordable prices, air-conditioned facilities and free parking close to the theatre. Premiere Stages also provides free or discounted tickets to patrons with disabilities. All Premiere Stages facilities are fully accessible spaces, and companion seating is available for patrons with disabilities. Assistive listening devices and large print programs are available at all times; publications in alternate formats are available with advanced notice. Call (908) 737-4092 for a list of sign-interpreted, audio-described or open-captioned performances. For more information, visit Premiere Stages online at [www.kean.edu/premierestages](http://www.kean.edu/premierestages).



**HONORS CHOIR...** Twenty-four students from Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School participated in the Region II Honors Choirs on January 26 Pictured, back row, left to right, are: Matthew Schuman, Paul Cherubini, Alexander Karakis, Steven Haverlock, Alex Walejewsky, Bryan Buchanan, Kyle Magee, Meghan Ryan. Middle row, left to right, are: Kaitlyn Buchanan, Brianna Peterson, Joseph Haverlock, Mary Schoenauer, Melody Weigel, Zoe Verrico, Lauren Kilcullen, Maya Mitterhoff, Anna Close, Julia Guarneri, Director Jan Allan. Pictured, front row, left to right, are: Conor Flood, Ethan Graham, Jonathon Dawson, Ross Mulcahy, Hansel Romero, Joshua Axelrod.

### SPFHS Students Participate in Honors Concert

SCOTCHPLAINS-FANWOOD—Twenty-four students from Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School participated in the Region II Honors Choirs on January 26 at Monroe Township High School. The choir performed under the baton of Dr. Amanda Quist of Westminster Choir College and Mr. Wayne Mallette of Summit High School.

The students sang a variety of repertoire demonstrating their vocal excellence. These students were selected because of their high scores determined in an audition process includ-

ing more than 500 students that took place in December.

Senior Jonathon Dawson and Junior Maya Mitterhoff were honored to sing the National Anthem because they received the highest scores in their vocal parts. Juniors Alexander Karakis and Steven Haverlock performed as soloists with the choir and senior Hansel Romero was a percussionist in addition to singing. Senior Lauren Kilcullen was honored for being a member of Regional Choir for all four years of high school.

## NJYT Announces Auditions For Musical *Oklahoma!*

ROSELLE PARK—New Jersey Youth Theatre (NJYT), the Bickford Theatre in Morristown and the Algonquin Arts Theatre in Manasquan will join forces this coming summer by assembling a theatrical company of young adult performers to present Rodgers and Hammerstein's brilliant first musical collaboration, *Oklahoma!* Performances will be presented July 17-27 at the Algonquin Arts Theatre and August 1-10 at the Bickford Theatre.

Open singing auditions for *Oklahoma!* will be held at the Algonquin Arts Theatre, 173 Main Street in Manasquan, on Saturday, April 5, from 1 to 5 p.m., at the NJYT/Audio Inc. Studios, 172 West Westfield Avenue in Roselle Park, on Sunday, April 6, from 1 to 6 p.m., and on Saturday, April 12, from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Open dance auditions for trained dancers will take place at the studio on Saturday, April 12, from 3:30 to 5 p.m. Dance callbacks are at 6 p.m. the same evening at the studio. Final Callbacks will be Saturday, April 19, by appointment. Open orchestra auditions will be held on Sunday, April 6, from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. at the studio.

Seeking a diverse cast and orchestra, young performers ages fifteen to twenty-five with classical

and non-classical vocal, dance and instrumental training are encouraged to audition. Cast auditionees should bring a headshot and sheet music in the correct key. Actors are welcome to sing a selection from the show.

For further information regarding auditions, technical apprenticeships, or general NJYT information, go to [www.njyouththeatre.org](http://www.njyouththeatre.org) or call (908) 233-3200.

For ticket and schedule information for *Oklahoma!* at the Algonquin Arts Theatre, call (732) 528-9211 or go online at [algonquinarts.org](http://algonquinarts.org); at the Bickford Theatre, call (973) 971-3706 or go online at [info@bickfordtheatre.org](http://info@bickfordtheatre.org). Tickets for Bickford and Algonquin performances may also be purchased at the box offices.

This program is made possible in part by the generous support of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation, the Lillian Pitkin Schenck Fund, the Edelman Foundation and the Westfield Foundation.



**SOLO EXHIBITION...** Partners International, LLC has extended the 2008-2013 Retrospective Exhibition of Theodosia A. G. Tamborlane's 86 abstract oil paintings until to Friday, February 21. Hours are Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Partners Headquarters 9 East 37th Street New York, N.Y. Pictured, "Toys and Games IX."

### Town Book Store Hosts *New York Times* Best-Selling Author

WESTFIELD—The Town Book Store will be hosting *New York Times* best-selling author Jenny Milchman on Saturday, February 8, from 2-4 p.m.

One January morning, in a frozen Adirondack village, Nora Hamilton wakes to find her police detective husband missing from their bed. Nora discovers what happened to her husband within minutes. But that is when the real questions begin. "Cover of Snow" is a dark, wintry tale about the lies we tell those who are closest to us...and those we tell ourselves.

Now in its fifth printing, "Cover of Snow" was chosen as an Indie Next Pick, received starred reviews from *Publishers Weekly* and *Booklist*, and praise from *The New York Times* as well as many other publications.

Jenny Milchman is a suspense novelist from Morristown who took 11 years to get published. Once her debut novel appeared, Jenny hit the road with her family on a 7 month/35,000 mile book tour, visiting over 300 bookstores, libraries, and book clubs. Jenny is the founder of "Take Your Child to a Bookstore Day," which was celebrated by over 650 bookstores in all 50 states and four foreign countries this year. Jenny chairs the Debut Authors Program for International Thriller Writers and teaches for New York Writers Workshop.

On February 8, Jenny will appear at The Town Bookstore to talk about her critically acclaimed debut, the long road to publication, and what happens once things start to speed up.

Meet Jenny Milchman at The Town Book Store located at 270 East Broad Street in Westfield (corner of East Broad and Elmer Streets). If you are unable to attend this event, feel free to call The Town Book Store at (908) 233-3535 to reserve an autographed copy of "Cover of Snow."

## SPFHS to Present *How to Succeed in Business*

SCOTCH PLAINS - Get ready to enjoy a fabulous performance by the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS) Repertory Theatre filled with laughter and song when they present *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*.

*How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* tells the story of J. Pierrepont Finch, a young, ambitious window washer, who uses a book called "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying" to rapidly climb the corporate ladder in New York City in 1961.

This smart, zany musical, which features a musical score by *Guys and Dolls* composer Frank Loesser, satirizes the corporate world of yesterday and today, with a touch of romance and lots of laughs along the way.

Director Matthew Capodicasa returns following last year's production of *The Wedding Singer*. Matthew graduated SPFHS in 2005, and NYU's Tisch School of Arts in 2009.

Jan Allen, Choral Director at the high school returns as producer and music director, with choreographer, Jennifer DiGiuseppe, an SPFHS alumna and recent graduate from the University of New Hampshire, joining the team. Joanne Sprague, Rep Theatre's costume designer for the past several years returns, along with Durand Thomas as the Pit Band Director.

Tickets are \$17 for adults; \$14 for students and \$14 for seniors (age 60 and up). Seniors with "Gold Cards" may use them for the Sunday matinee and Thursday night performance only. Contact Kathleen Sheehy at [kgsheehy@verizon.net](mailto:kgsheehy@verizon.net) or call (908) 342-0856 to reserve a Gold Card ticket. To purchase tickets visit [sphsreptix.brownpapertickets.com](http://sphsreptix.brownpapertickets.com)

Onsite ticket ordering at SPFHS will be available on Mondays, February 10, 24 and March 3, from 7 to 8 p.m. in the auditorium lobby of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School located at 667 Westfield Road, Scotch Plains.



**KNOW IT ALLS...** Director of Museum Operations Bill Schroh, Jr. was impressed by his guests' extensive trivia knowledge at a recent Downton Abbey Luncheon.

## Liberty Hall Museum Hosts Downton Abbey Luncheon

UNION—Liberty Hall Museum has announced it will host an additional Downton Abbey Luncheon on Saturday, February 8 (Noon-3 p.m.), after January's event and a second Downton Abbey Luncheon scheduled for February 22 sold out in record time.

"We are excited that Downton Abbey is back on the air, but we never dreamed that so many of our guests would be as well," said Bill Schroh, Jr., Director of Museum Operations. "Our Downton Abbey trivia game during the January luncheon was one of the toughest I have ever seen. Every guest had their arm raised ready to answer every question. I hope the rest of the Luncheons are just as fun."

Guests hoping to attend the February 8 event are encouraged to secure their reservations as soon as possible by calling (908) 527-0400 or emailing [libertyhall@kean.edu](mailto:libertyhall@kean.edu). Limited seating is also available for Liberty Hall's Downton Abbey Luncheon scheduled for Saturday, March 22, (Noon-3 p.m.).

It has been a remarkably auspicious start to the year for the former residence of New Jersey's first elected governor, William Livingston, which recorded its best public attendance to date last season. "2013 was a great year for Liberty Hall Museum," stated Mr. Schroh. "We recorded our highest amount of visitors ever, over 20,000 people, and 2014 looks just as promising. Even though we are closed for public tours for the winter months, we still have plenty of events happening."

One such event is Liberty Hall's upcoming Dr. Seuss' Birthday Breakfast on Saturday, March 1, (10 a.m.-Noon). Children and their families will enjoy an all-you-can-eat break-

fast buffet, make their very own Dr. Seuss hat, and take their picture with silly props and the one and only Cat in the Hat himself. Admission is \$23 for children, and \$28 for adults; reservations are required by Saturday, February 22, and can be made by calling (908) 527-0400 or emailing [libertyhall@kean.edu](mailto:libertyhall@kean.edu).

The Museum has also announced its next ongoing exhibit, *Bon Voyage!* 200 Years of Luxury Travel, which premieres Opening Day, Tuesday, April 1. "Bon Voyage is designed to take you on an exciting journey of how the Livingston and Kean families traveled from the 1780s through the 1950s, stopping at exotic locations from around the world," said Lacey Bongard, Coordinator of Museum Programs. "Guests will learn what it was like to see the world via planes, trains, automobiles, and ships, and experience the many artifacts the Livingstons and Keans brought back on their adventures."

Liberty Hall Museum at Kean University chronicles more than 240 years of American history. The museum also houses extensive collections of furniture, ceramics, textiles, toys and tools owned by seven generations of the Livingston and Kean families. The Firehouse Museum, built in 2004, houses three antique fire engines, including a rare 1911 American LaFrance Metropolitan Steam Engine. The museum is currently open for group tours (10 or more guests), private events, and scheduled seasonal activities such as those outlined above. Public tours resume Tuesday, April 1.

For reservations and further information, call (908) 527-0400, e-mail [libertyhall@kean.edu](mailto:libertyhall@kean.edu) or visit [www.kean.edu/libertyhall](http://www.kean.edu/libertyhall).

## POPCORN

### "The Invisible Woman"

Barely Worth Seeing  
2 popcorns

One Popcorn, Poor — Two Popcorns, Fair — Three Popcorns, Good — Four Popcorns, Excellent

By MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER  
Film Critic

Maybe Ralph Fiennes, who plays Charles Dickens in "The Invisible Woman," a quasi-biopic about the legendary author's secret relationship with his much younger mistress, Nelly (née Ellen Ternan), shouldn't have directed himself. But that's just one thought in attempting to explain the numerous inadequacies that make this film a disappointing, slow boat to rather mundane divulgements.

Succinctly deduced after the screening by a woman seated behind me, who certainly wasn't at a loss for words before the reels rolled, "They could have told it all in fifteen minutes." Oh, well. While I was left desiring much more about one of the literary lions most influential to my choice of vocational torture, perhaps I'll somehow find benefit from said astute critic's complete vacation plans for the spring and summer.

Although Abi Morgan's screenplay based on the book by Claire Tomalin gives it the old college try, the pre-media-ubiquitous 19th Century made keeping a secret, even a juicy one, somewhat possible. It isn't until the last of Charles Dickens's children has passed on (in 1933) that the full breadth and width of the previously hushed whispers are amplified.

Adding quandary to dearth of facts, we are left to decide the ultimate significance, historically and literarily, of this affaire de coeur that was instrumental to the legendary writer's divorce from his wife, Catherine, played by Joanna Scanlan. Granted, it was important if not completely earthshaking to all parties concerned. However, inured as we are today to an entire portion of the press devoted to regularly regaling us with sexual scandal, by comparison this cold case of infidelity isn't revived beyond lukewarm status.

Agreed, scholars of the written word have no doubt found some value in the theory that Nelly, portrayed by pretty Felicity Jones, was the inspiration for Estella in "Great Expectations," Lucy Manette in "A Tale of Two Cities," etc., etc. So, are we to then assume that Dickens wouldn't have written these novels if he had never known Nelly?

We are thus directed into that philosophical, "what if?" abyss that goes far beyond any conjectures concerning the afflatus power of lovers. It's the stuff superbly dissected and hypothesized in "It's a Wonderful Life" (1947), where George Bailey gets to see what the world would be like had he never been born.

But where does it stop...with us wondering if there still would be a "David Copperfield" even if Mrs. Dickens hadn't given birth to Charles? More frightening yet, what great novels, discoveries or global horrors never came to be because

this or that happened, or didn't? It's enough to furrow Solomon's brow, let alone ours.

Considering the aforementioned failings, I suggest the director, faced with a paucity of plot and details, might have populated his script with information about Dickens that we do know. Surely there's no lack of interesting notions to relate here...things about the era, or even the writing process itself. But aside from suggesting the arduous purity of composing a bestseller with a dip pen, there isn't much here either. I can vouch that staring at a blank page for a seeming eternity is neither entertaining nor elucidating.

All of which leaves us to rely on that one item of human interest that sells no matter the product with which it is associated. Yep, right above hotcakes on any marketer's list of sure financial panaceas is good old lust. Unfortunately, while I assume that Nelly and Charles made the most of the disgrace they purportedly fashioned behind closed doors, you wouldn't know it from this subtle treatment. Perchance it's all that time it would take to hang up those endless layers of Victorian duds that precludes any profound steamships.

Instead, we get bushels of hushed rationalization so popular in the Age of Innocence, and bunches of vague longing just slightly more sophisticated than the paralyzed stare etched by contemporary boy and girl adolescents at their first dance. We appreciate the reserved tone, and yet, surely there must be some dramatically suitable middle ground between painful modesty and the latest Miley Cyrus tossing herself on the pyre of virgin sacrifice.

Further obfuscating matters, ambient mutterings in acoustically-challenged anterooms, voiced in British accents unappreciative of the American ears that might attempt to eavesdrop, make more tedious an already slow pace. While Mr. Fiennes establishes a credible aura of greatness for his celebrated scribe, and Miss Jones is reasonably heartrending as the compromised title courtesan, their efforts cannot ameliorate a deficient script ineffectively directed.

Hence, like any number of the novelist's iconic waifs, we are left wanting...thankfully not for sustenance as we have doubtless purchased the giant bucket of popcorn advertised as the concession stand's "Best Buy!" But rather, because "The Invisible Woman" lacks the properly arranged elements that bode for a rosy, moviegoing destiny, we are rendered bereft of great expectations.

...  
"The Invisible Woman," rated R, is a Sony Pictures Classics release directed by Ralph Fiennes and stars Ralph Fiennes, Felicity Jones and Kristin Scott Thomas. Running time: 111 minutes

# CRANFORD DRAMATIC CLUB

## SPRING AWAKENING

A NEW MUSICAL

MUSIC BY DUNCAN SHIEK    BOOK/LYRICS BY STEVEN SATER    BASED ON PLAY BY FRANK WEDEKIND

**Feb. 14-15, 21-22, 28 Mar. 1**

[www.cdctheatre.org](http://www.cdctheatre.org)

**Tickets/Info 908-276-7611**  
**78 Winans Ave, Cranford**

NEW JERSEY STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS  
Funding has been made possible in part by the NJ State Council on the Arts, Dept. of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, through a grant administered by the Union County Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs