

Behind the lights

GRAY, Patricia

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By Jennifer Bell

The Intelligencer

Patricia Gray knows that producing a Belleville Theatre Guild production means she'll be doing a little bit of everything.

And that's included such off-the-wall jobs as making sure the male actors auditioning for *Pirates of Penzance* had sufficiently hairy chests.

"We couldn't have pirates without hair on their chests, could we?" chuckled Gray. "I have to say, we've had a few laughs about that one."

But anatomy aside, most of what Gray does is designed to keep a theatre guild's production within its financial means.

Budgeting, scheduling,

personnel and public relations are all Gray's bailiwick; and when she's in the midst of helping to prepare for a play (Neil Simon's *Rumors* is now in rehearsals), co-ordinating these elements can get a little hectic.

But Gray loves it.

"This is strictly volunteer for me, as well as everyone involved. We're here because we love theatre and having a good time."

In addition to a busy schedule as a nurse at Belleville General Hospital, Gray spends four to five nights a week at Pinnacle Playhouse during performances.

On any given day, she'll be found making the dozens of required phone calls to schedule cast members, locate furniture and props for the stage, and even painting sets.

And if she ever needs a change of pace, she'll occasionally appear on-stage, if the right role comes her way.

She's doing double duty for *Rumors*, as both producer and in the role of Cookie, a rather eccentric cooking show host who suffers from both hilarious



Patricia Gray loves the hectic schedule of working with the Belleville Theatre Guild.

Intelligencer photo by Frank O'Conno

back spasms and an unusual fashion sense.

The comedy, set in New York City in the 1980s, is directed by Phil Bowerman and is scheduled to open Nov. 23.

But Gray says producing and performing sometimes means biting off more than she can chew.

"I try not to do it too often, as it means I'm extremely busy."

In looking back at her nine years with the Belleville Theatre Guild — including a two-year stint as president in the late 1980s — Gray comments on the swift passage of time.

"It seems as though I just started here, but my first production, *One*

Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, was back in 1986. It has gone very quickly."

Gray moved to Belleville in 1981 with husband Cameron and children Simon and Joanna. She and Cameron were part of Peterborough's St. James Players and appeared in several musicals before his work transferred him to The Friendly City.

Shortly after their arrival, the couple saw an ad for a theatre workshop, and knew right away they'd be getting back into the performing arts.

"We both like the theatre, and in many ways it's great to share that with your spouse. We both understand what makes each other tick."