



Victor Young (left), Judy Marshak and Richard Binsley star in *Barn Raisers '85*, a satire on today's society, at the Red Barn Theatre in Jackson's Point. The play runs through until Aug. 17.

## Barn Raisers '85 - a satire of today

By DONNA COX  
Staff Reporter

*Barn Raisers '85*, a hilarious musical satire of society today, has been custom written by Canadian playwright/lyricist Jim Betts for the Southern Ontario audience.

Mr. Betts has either written or contributed to such plays as *The Shooting of Dan McGrew*, *Jacob Two-Two Meets The Hooded Fang* and the CBC broadcast of *Thin Ice*. He wrote *Barn Raisers* specifically for the Red Barn Theatre.

The musical director, Bob Ashley, has many credits in Toronto and other major theatres across Canada for such productions as *Snoopy*, *Jacob Two-Two* and presently *The Little Shop of Horrors*.

The cast consists of three people: Richard Binsley, Judy Marshak and Victor Young, three well-known Toronto area actors.

Mr. Binsley and Mr. Young have performed in plays across Canada and the Stratford Theatre. Ms. Marshak, a two-time ACTRA nominee, has appeared on Canadian stage, television and is currently recording an album with her musical trio *The Airwaves*.

This play consists of approximately 20 short musical skits. The lyrics, which are easily understood by people of any age group, are witty and the message subtle.

Skits include suggestions to Finance Minister Wilson about what to do with the unemployed, a dramatic song about winter in July (a critique on the possibility of a nuclear winter), sex in such literature as Margaret Lawrence, and Brian Mulroney singing *I'm Holier Than Thou*.

The events probed into are very current. For example, a comparison is drawn between the baseball heroes of long ago and the money hungry, executive-type players of today and the baseball strike.

Mr. Betts has the fantastic ability to create funny tunes out of subjects such as the Metro Zoo Pandas mating and the Yuppie and the Yahoo falling in love. He is clever while drawing similarities between the actor President Reagan and his *Star Wars* program and Luke Skywalker in the movie *Star Wars*.

*Barn Raisers* is playing from August 6 through to the 17th. Shows from Tuesday to Friday start at 8:30 p.m. Saturday shows times are 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. Tickets are \$10 per person and with students and seniors admitted for \$8. Tickets are available by calling the Red Barn at 722-3249 or the Toronto line at 675-3111.

The Red Barn Theatre is located in Jackson's Point, a half an hour north of Stouffville off Highway 48.

## MLT looks for members as theatre opening nears

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — This is the first of a four-part series on Markham Little Theatre, now launching a membership drive prior to the opening of the new Markham Theatre for Performing Arts.

By LIZ WYATT

Anyone who joins a theatre group is dying to act, right? Wrong.

Of the 50 or so members of Markham Little Theatre, at least a dozen couldn't be dragged on stage by wild horses, and a further dozen only in circumstances of dire emergency.

Then why do they belong? Because theatre, contrary to a popular misconception, is far more than just acting.

Almost any talent or skill can be applied to it; almost anyone, whether professional or hobbyist, can plan a part in it — backstage, as well as onstage.

Artists can paint backdrop scenery or design sets, costumes or posters. Writers can work on publicity or write skits for revues; musicians and composers can provide incidental music for plays and songs for revues.

Carpenters build sets, dressmakers design and sew costumes, hairdressers and beauticians style hair or makeup the cast. Electrical experts and stereo buffs are needed to design and operate the lighting and sound systems.

There's even a place for such nonsense types as businessmen, administrators or organizational wizards: in ticket sales, finances, producing or stage managing.

MLT's president, Gail Weir, thinks that this wide diversity in the interests and occupations of its members is what makes belonging to MLT so rewarding.

"Sharing our talents in a creative way is both challenging and fun," she says. "And of course it's a great outlet for self-expression."

Now deep in preparation for the October opening of the new Markham Theatre for Performing Arts, the town's award-winning group is launching a campaign to enlarge its membership.

With access to a first-class theatre, MLT is expanding its season to four plays this year, instead of the usual two. With the new theatre's latest, up-to-the-minute technical facilities, the group hopes to bring an even higher standard of professionalism to their productions than ever before.

Awards have been numerous. In the 10 years that MLT has been entering a play in the annual drama festivals of the Association of Community Theatres—Central Ontario and its predecessor, some 15 individual awards — in acting, directing, producing and costume design — have been won.

Along with innumerable nominations garnered over the years, the group picked up four collective awards: best play and best visual presentation for 1979's *There Goes the Bride*; best Canadian play for last year's *Waiting for the Parade* and, in 1977, a special adjudicator's award for "presenting a play under difficult conditions."

This last award explains the group's excitement about performing in the new theatre. "We can hardly wait," says Mrs. Weir. "We've struggled so hard for so long to do good work in a high school gym."

The new theatre will be a proving ground for us, but it will be wonderful to see our long-suffering audience seated in comfort. No more craning their necks to see, or straining their ears to hear.

With this acid test ahead of them, MLT needs more members to help cope with the demands of space-age technical equipment and an expanded season.

The group extends an open invitation to all those interested in joining Markham Little Theatre to attend their next general meeting on Monday, August 12 at 8 p.m. at Cedar Grove Community Centre on 14th Avenue, just east of the 10th Line.

For further information, call Bunty Webb at 294-2535 or Gail Weir at 294-2766.

Note: Liz Wyatt is an immediate past president of Markham Little Theatre and a three-time director.



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