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Curtains up!

Playhouse ready for new season, the end of repairs

By Melissa Gagliardi

mgagliardi@courier-journal.com

As the Little Colonel Playhouse in Pewee Valley prepares for a new season, it's also looking forward to the end of storm repairs.

Wind peeled off part of the building's facade in January, and work has been under way to repair the building while preserving its historic appearance.

The wind toppled trees and damaged other property in the area, but the playhouse, which dates to 1912, suffered one of the worst hits.

The Little Colonel Players moved into the building in the 1960s, and the group has been staging dramas, musicals and plays ever since.

Nearing the end of the restoration work is exciting, said Grace Poganski, who is on the Players' board of directors.

While the troupe had to find another stage for one play, it was able to use the playhouse by delaying another and rearranging scaffolding so people could enter for "Will You Still Love Me in the Morning," staged in May.

But now the scaffolding is down and only a few finishing touches remain, like new shutters and a new awning.

Poganski said she feels lucky, "considering what could have happened with the kind of damage that occurred." Even though the winds left a gaping hole exposing the attic, all the props and costumes in the building stayed dry. And no one was hurt.

A grand reopening is in the works, as is a fund-raising campaign because the repairs have run close to \$83,500, while insurance paid about \$71,500.

"We're encouraging people to become patrons," Poganski said. "We have wonderful patrons who have been very generous over the years. They're great supporters. They come to the shows, they love the Little Colonel. We're always grateful for them."

Poganski said the upcoming season has a couple of shows that are "a bit different than our normal fare."

For instance, auditions will be held at 7 p.m. Aug. 10 and 11 for George Bernard Shaw's satire, "Arms and the Man" -- a more nuanced play than the Players normally put on, Poganski said. But, she

quipped, they don't plan to attempt the Bulgarian accents.

Money is also needed for a wish list of such things as an upstairs bathroom handy to the dressing rooms and kitchen improvements.

"We're lucky to have an historic building to work in, but it requires a lot of upkeep," she said.

Reporter Melissa Gagliardi can be reached at (502) 582-4117.
