



Tim Keller/Special to The Chronicle-News

Adams State actors are featured in the hilarious "Unnecessary Farce." The comedy's final performances are Thursday and Friday at 7:30 p.m. From left are David Trudeau, Bethany Hernandez, Jason Wells and Catherine Herrick.

Adams State sends talent to Shuler Theater summer roster

By Tim Keller
Special to The Chronicle-News

RATON — Each summer the Shuler Theater assembles several actors from throughout the United States to join its professional summer repertory season as the Kaleidoscope Players, a name that goes back all the way to the early 1960s when Bill Fegan, the Shuler's producer, first brought his troupe to town.

This year's company is a little different: five members in summer residence are products of southern Colorado's Adams State University Theater Department, including four who are still students at the Alamosa campus.

Last year's work by David Trudeau was the vanguard, tipping off Fegan and director Gail Dixon-Willden to the vibrancy of the Adams State program. Trudeau, now a full-time professional actor in Denver, spent three years in the Adams State theater program.

Dixon-Willden traveled to the Alamosa campus in February to audition 15 young actors. "When Bill Fegan originally arranged the auditions at Adams, neither of us thought I would find everything we were looking for at one college," she says. "After the auditions there was no need to look elsewhere — we had the ideal costumer and actors to round out the summer. They were not only extremely talented and fit the roles perfectly, but enthusiastic and energetic about coming to Raton, just what we were looking for. With David Trudeau, a former Adams student, we have a talented hard-working professional actor that can help mentor the college actors."

Joining the Kaleidoscope Players this summer are costumer Holli McFadden and actors Bethany Hernandez, Catherine Herrick and Jason Wells, along with Trudeau. They're in four overlapping plays at the Shuler. They received the scripts in March and were expected to have their lines memorized when they arrived in town. Since arriving at their Raton summer housing around Memorial Day, they haven't had much time to be "home." Rehearsals run six days a week from 9:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. with breaks for lunch and dinner. Sunday is their



Tim Keller/Special to The Chronicle-News

The Shuler Theater is drawing heavily on the vibrant theater program at Colorado's Adams State University in Alamosa this summer. In full-time professional residence are, from left, costumer Holli McFadden and actors Jason Wells, Bethany Hernandez, David Trudeau and Catherine Herrick.

"off" day, but now that the shows have begun, there's a 2:30 p.m. matinee most Sundays.

By now you'd think they might be worn down; instead, the youthful passion that fuels their work is immediately apparent both on stage and off. "A good show has the power to transform both the actors and the audience," Trudeau says. What about the fact that most of this season's plays are pure comedy? "Sometimes," he says, "all a person needs is a good laugh."

Herrick has been acting on stages since the sixth grade. "They put me in a comedic role and I suddenly realized that I was good at making people laugh. It was the best high

I've ever had." Entering her third year at Adams State, the Shuler Theater is her first professional experience, but not the last: looking to her future, she says, "I would like to do theatre and not stop."

Wells enjoys the transformative power of theater. "I've always liked storytelling and entertaining people. When a show hits a certain point in its intensity, the audience will forget where they are and it's like they're living that moment with us. Whatever problems they may have, they escape all that and essentially join us on the stage." He got his start in melodramas as a child in Beulah. Now a senior at Adams State, he plans to pursue a doctorate degree in his co-

major of history and teach at the university level, but if you see him losing his cool in Gaelic as the Scottish hit man in "Unnecessary Farce," you'll know that he's unlikely to ever abandon the stage.

Herrick sees life as too short and limited: through acting, she gets to experience many lives. "I've always had a problem with wanting to be a thousand things at once. That's not possible for a normal person. As an actor, I can be a contemporary accountant, then an 18th century cross dresser. There are all these amazing things that I can be on stage. If I can get enough into a character, I feel utterly taken out of Catherine and into this

other person. It's playing pretend to the tenth power." The Adams State junior credits two public school theatre teachers with sparking her passion for acting. She especially loves improvisational comedy, which may take her to Chicago to try out for the famed Second City troupe.

McFadden was eight years old when her mother started her on sewing, but she hated it. In high school, she wanted to get involved in theatre "because of a boy." Although she had acting experience through Missoula Children's Theatre summer programs, she found that she was more comfortable working backstage. She spent her last two high school years working in the school's theatre costume shop. It was enough to hook her: she'll finish her theatre degree at Adams State next spring — but not before costuming all four repertory shows at the Shuler this summer.

All five Coloradans sing the praises of the theatre program at Adams State. Trudeau proclaims it Colorado's best. Herrick says, "It's amazing. The professors' interest in the students is enough to keep me there." McFadden adds, "The four professors all work well together and take a personal interest in helping us further our own goals." Hernandez says, "They've all told us they're coming down to see us in the plays here at the Shuler."

The first and perhaps best way to see them performing all together is in this week's final two performances of the fast-moving (and R-rated) zaniness of "Unnecessary Farce," which begins at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday and Friday nights.

The musical comedy "Church Basement Ladies," which includes Trudeau and Hernandez, continues through Aug. 4. "Servant of Two Masters," another farce, opens July 14 and runs through July 29. The murder mystery "Web of Murder" opens July 21 and runs through Aug. 3.

General admission tickets are available at the door — \$15 for adults, \$13 for seniors, and \$5 for children. A book of ten tickets is available for \$100. For further information, contact the Shuler Theater at (575) 445-4746.

Alcoholic needs help to beat addiction

DEAR ABBY: I am a 39-year-old gay man in a three-year relationship with a wonderful man. We had both come out of very long and abusive relationships when we met. He works



Dear Abby
Jeanne
Phillips

hard, and I stay home and take care of the house, the animals and the yard. There is no kind of abuse in our relationship. The problem is that I am an alcoholic. He keeps telling me he can handle it as long as there is no abuse. I feel I'm taking advantage of him and that he deserves better than this, and I have told him so.

I have been in rehab several times and tried AA. Nothing worked. I always go back to drinking. Where do I go from here? I don't want to lose the love of my life, but it's killing me inside that he has to put up with my drinking problem. -- NEEDS HELP IN FLORIDA

DEAR NEEDS HELP: There IS abuse going on in your relationship -- substance abuse. Until you finally decide that there is something more important than a drink, you will remain stuck in your addiction. And as long as your partner continues to accept and "handle it," he will be your enabler. Where you go from here is up to you, but getting counseling for your low self-esteem and going back to AA would be giant steps in the right direction.

DEAR ABBY: It seems that every other letter you print concerns a demanding relative (a parent, in-law, sibling, etc.). The writer always wants to know how to avoid unreasonable demands without causing "unpleasantness." May I say a word to these folks? Be honest and admit that the relationship is ALREADY unpleasant. Demanding people are impossible to please. They know their control over you depends on temper tantrums and/or fits of sulking and tears. They'll pitch these fits regularly no matter how hard you try to please them.

When faced with an unreasonable demand, just say "no." Don't waste time giving reasons or trying to work out a compromise. You already know it won't do any good. Then hunker down and wait for the explosion, keeping in mind that the longer you have been a doormat, the more violent and bitter the reaction will be.

Above all, do not be drawn into a fight! Controlling people love to fight, and they are good at it. Your weapon should be polite withdrawal. Refuse meetings. Screen your calls. Ignore letters and emails unless they contain an apology and indicate a sincere desire for change. It may shock your domineering relatives into more reasonable behavior.

If not, you haven't lost a thing. You may even find that your life is less complicated without them. Draw the line and let your family know that future relationships will be based on love AND respect, or there will be no future relations. You won't regret it. -- BEEN THERE, DONE THAT, KNOXVILLE, TENN.

DEAR BEEN THERE: People who have spent a lifetime trying to please others may find your recommendations difficult to put into practice. Habits can become so entrenched that they are hard to break without coaching and positive reinforcement. That is why I advise those who feel constantly put upon to consider taking classes in assertiveness training.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.