



Tim Keller/Special to The Chronicle-News

A farce and physical comedy, the Shuler Theater's "Servant of Two Masters" opens this weekend. Without makeup in an early dress rehearsal this week are, from left, actors Brenda Ferri, David Trudeau, H.M. Burleson (hidden), Rick Trice, Bethany Hernandez, Jason Wells and Jillian Solano. The cast also includes Catherine Herrick, T.J. Mendez, Holli McFadden and Zach Salazar.

Shuler opens third summer comedy this weekend

By Tim Keller
Special to The Chronicle-News

RATON — Saturday night's opening of "Servant of Two Masters" will pile on more farce and physical comedy in a Shuler Theater 2012 summer repertory season characterized by high laugh count.

Although the play goes all the way back to 1743 and the "commedia dell'arte" of the Italian playwright Carlo Goldoni, today's audiences will recognize the physical

comedy practiced by Lucille Ball and others.

"It harkens back to the time of vaudeville," says director Gail Dixon-Willden. "There are shades of the Marx Brothers, Red Skelton, and the physical schtick we don't get in plays anymore."

Not unless you attend the current Broadway production of "One Man, Two Guvnors," which is the same play with a different title. First presented last year by England's National

Theater, it won widespread acclaim. The Guardian gave it five stars, calling it "a triumph of visual and verbal comedy, one of the funniest productions in the National's history."

Actor James Corden played the lead role in England until he crossed the water to star in the Broadway production, where he won this year's Tony Award for Best Actor. The production was nominated for six other Tonys as well.

In the Shuler production, the action centers on David Trudeau's quirky and comical character, the servant Truffaldino, who forever complains of an empty stomach. His ceaseless quest to eat fuels much of the action and leads to his pretending to be the servant of a second master in order to get an extra meal.

He's not the only one assuming another identity in a plot reminiscent of Shakespeare's comedies of disguise, confusion, and

love. By play's end, two couples have found love.

In addition to Trudeau, the Kaleidoscope Players cast includes Brenda Ferri, Rick Trice, H.M. Burleson, Jason Wells, Bethany Hernandez, Jillian Solano, Catherine Herrick, Holli McFadden, T.J. Mendez, and Zach Salazar.

McFadden created period costumes for the show, assisted by Mary Ann Dailey and Mollie Freeman. Dixon-Willden designed the sets. Trudeau designed the

lighting.

"Servant of Two Masters" opens Saturday night at 7:30 p.m., followed by a Sunday matinee at 2:30 p.m. Additional performances follow on July 19, 20, and 28 at 7:30 p.m., before closing with another Sunday matinee on July 29.

General admission tickets are available at the door — \$15 adults, \$13 seniors, and \$5 children. Additional information is available at the Shuler Theater, (575) 445-4746.

Obama extends health plan to temp firefighters

By Dan Elliott
Associated Press

DENVER — President Obama will make federal health insurance available to about 8,000 temporary wildland firefighters, a White House official said Tuesday.

Despite the grueling and dangerous work they do, the 8,000 firefighters aren't covered by federal health insurance because they are temporary seasonal employees. Under federal personnel rules, such employees can't buy into federal health insurance plans.

The White House official said firefighters will get access to federal insurance plans this month.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity because Obama's decision hasn't been formally announced.

Temporary seasonal firefighters make up more than half of the 15,000 wildland firefighters on the federal payroll this busy wildfire season.

Obama's decision was first reported by The Denver Post and came after stories by The Post, The Associated Press and others about the firefighters' dilemma.

Obama also spoke with some firefighters during a June 29 visit to the scene of a wildfire outside Colorado Springs.

Members of a South Dakota-based hotshot crew who fought massive wildfires in Colorado and other states this year launched a petition drive seeking health benefits, largely out of anger over a colleague who was left with a \$70,000 hospital bill after his son was born prematurely.

Their petition quickly gathered more than 125,000 signatures, bolstered by this year's historic fire season in the West and the ongoing national debate over health care.

"That's amazing. Wow," said Constance Van Kley,



Associated Press

This family photo provided by Nathan Ochs shows his wife, Constance Van Kley, Nathan Ochs and their sons Rudy, left, and Abraham during a visit to Little Devils Tower near Custer, S.D. If hotshot firefighter Nathan Ochs is hurt on the job, workers compensation would pay for his medical care

wife of firefighter Nathan Ochs, when she was told of Obama's decision. The couple had no health insurance when their son, Rudy, was born seven weeks premature in 2008.

The hospital forgave most of their \$70,000 bill, but it was their experience that spurred Ochs, John Lauer and other firefighters to start their petition drive.

"When we were talking about it in our kitchen 27 months ago, John thought he'd be working on it for about a year and there was a 5 percent chance it would go anywhere at all," Van Kley said.

"It makes me feel really hopeful that you can look at a problem, see a problem, and get this kind of response in this amount of time," she said. "We feel really heartened to know that people care about the

work that firefighters do." Lauer said he was "awestruck" by the speed of the decision.

"It really is going to make a big difference in a lot of people's lives," he said.

Rep. Diana DeGette, D-Colo., introduced legislation Tuesday that would give the firefighters access to federal insurance benefits, but Obama's move apparently makes that unnecessary.

The White House official who confirmed Obama's decision said the president had ordered the Agriculture and Interior departments, which hire the bulk of federal firefighters, and the Office of Personnel Management to open the insurance plans to firefighters.

DeGette said she was elated by the decision.

"In recent weeks, this

fight has clearly reminded all of us of what we owe to the people whose sacrifice and personal risk protect our homes, our families, and our communities," she said in a written statement.

Firefighters are covered by workers compensation if they're hurt on the job, but that doesn't cover off-season health problems or help their families.

The National Federation of Federal Employees, a labor union, estimates it would cost the federal government \$17.5 million a year to pay its share of premiums for seasonal firefighters working for the Forest Service, which employs about 70 percent of federal firefighters.

The rest work for the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and other agencies.

STATE BRIEFS

Associated Press

Official explains review of tax program

DENVER — An official leading a review of tax credits designed to promote Colorado economies in distressed areas says the goal is to restore public confidence in the program.

Colorado Office of Economic Development & International Trade Executive Director Ken Lund says a group created by the Legislature this year will examine the program's effectiveness.

The group met Wednesday and will study the state's enterprise-zone program through the fall. They will give recommendations to lawmakers.

The program was created 1986. Its goal is to provide tax credits to businesses in areas with high unemployment rates, low per capita incomes, or slow population growth.

Critics question the program's effectiveness at boosting local economies. Program supporters say the intent is to create a business-friendly environment and that success can't be measured solely by job creation.

County to proceed with oil restrictions

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, Colo. — The Routt County Board of Commissioners is going ahead with restrictions on oil drilling after defying warnings from the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission to stay out of it.

Commissioners on Tuesday approved an oil well permit with requirements for water-quality monitoring protecting 39 domestic water wells a mile away from the well in unincorporated Milner.

Commissioner Nancy Stahoviak tells Steamboat

Today protecting water quality is a local concern. State officials say they have the regulatory authority over drilling permits.

Parks department looks at funding ideas

FORT COLLINS, Colo. — Colorado Parks and Wildlife officials are considering corporate sponsorships or more oil and gas drilling in state parks to cope with budget cuts.

Assistant director Ken Brink says visitors do not want state parks named after corporations, but department officials say they may have no choice. The state already allows oil and gas drilling in St. Vrain State Park near Longmont.

According to the Fort Collins Coloradoan, 42 cash-strapped are being forced to make all their revenue on their own.

Aspen airport ending valet parking service

ASPEN, Colo. — People who can afford to take a limousine to the Aspen airport will have to tone down their expectations and forego valet service or take a shuttle or a taxi.

Pitkin County commissioners on Tuesday rejected a local limousine company's proposal to run a valet service at the airport that is popular with celebrities.

Officials say taxis and shuttles are suffering because they are often making one-way trips with no customers.

According to the Aspen Daily News, Rocky Mountain Limousine wanted to improve the luxury experience of visiting the Aspen area and add airport valets.

Company officials were seeking to lease 50 public parking spaces, causing commissioners to question where average people would park when spaces are scarce during high seasons.