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# PLAYBILL®

Greene County Fine Arts Council  
Crowley's Ridge College  
Paragould, AR

# Arsenic and Old Lace

Directed by  
Dr. Bruce Bryant

by Joseph  
Kesselring

SHOW TIMES:  
September 19-21  
Dinner 6:30 - Curtain 7:30  
September 22  
Dessert 1:45 - Curtain 2:30



With permission from  
Dramatist Play Service, Inc.

GCFAC Dinner Theater

September 19-22

Crowley's Ridge College  
Eubanks Cafeteria  
100 College Drive

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**Greene County Fine Arts Council**  
Crowley's Ridge College

PRESENTS

# ARSENIC AND OLD LACE

by

## Joseph Kesselring

with

Donna Davis

Debbie Haas

Aaron Speaks

Johnathon Mathis

Thom Fielder

Lauren King

Lee Bennett

Assistant Director  
Shani Barnhill

Sound and Technical  
Assistance  
Gary Cremeens  
& Chris Hughes

Costumer  
Debbie Haas and  
Shani Barnhil

Paint Design  
Renee Spence

Set Builders  
Kamron Taylor &  
Perry Baker

Set & Program Design  
Dr. Bruce Bryant

Board Liaison  
Jer Allen

**Directed by**  
**Dr. Bruce Bryant**

*Arsenic and Old Lace* is presented through special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service.  
440 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016  
Phone: 212-683-8960 Fax: 212-213-1539  
[www.Dramatists.com](http://www.Dramatists.com)

## END NOTES

### Director's Note - Arsenic and Old Lace

As I contemplated undertaking (no pun intended) this endeavor, I asked myself, "Why do we laugh at a production that is so dark? Should two murdering old ladies, a crazy homicidal brother, and their presidential-wannabe brother really be funny?" My answer. "YES!" Through dark comedy, we are able to explore the unspeakables within our society...euthanasia, mental illness, serial killers, and dysfunctional families. At the very same time, we are able to see the virtues within our society...hospitality, kindness, friendship, charity, and even love.

My hope for you is that you will see the dangerous place where virtue intersects with darkness. At that intersection, you will definitely laugh when seeing this production. But more importantly, I hope you will think, contemplate, opine, consider... Have things really changed since this classic first went on Broadway in January 1941 in a pre-WWII USA? In postmodern America, have our thoughts about these unspeakables changed? Has the intersection of darkness and virtue brightened or dimmed? Only you can decide.

To the performers in this play, I say, "Bravo! You are the greatest!" Their dedication to learning their lines, blocking, going over and over and over scenes for their relentless director has been admirable. They have been a joy in my life over the past several weeks, and the culmination of their hard work comes together on the stage...just for you! It is obvious that they want to entertain you!

Whew! The time is finally here! There's a performance today! What a ride!

**To you, our valued patrons...enjoy the show! To the cast...break a leg!**

### Director's Thank You

Special thanks to the following people who helped to make this production possible...

...Lisa, Haydn, Mills, and Mary Hannah Bryant who continue to support me in all of my endeavors...whether crazy or not! They think I can be a "star" someday.

...Shani Barnhill, a new friend and a person worthy of directing her own show. You have been a great help in making this possible. Thanks.

...GCFAC Board members who sold tables, worked as our liaison, built set, picked up money, ran errands, and helped to market this production. Your hard work has paid off.

...my late mother, Marian. She always believed in me...and I think she still does.



### A Note About the Set

Thanks to **Vintage Rental Depot**, a show sponsors, whose gracious loan of some of the set furniture tonight added just the right touch of distinction and class to our set. We hope that you will frequent their business for your rental and venue needs!

Thanks to **Phillips Funeral Home** for donating handles to make our window seat just PERFECT for this production.

The **portrait** above the mantle depicts the Brewster parents. It is an actual picture of Donna's grandparents, Gene and Rachel Meridith.

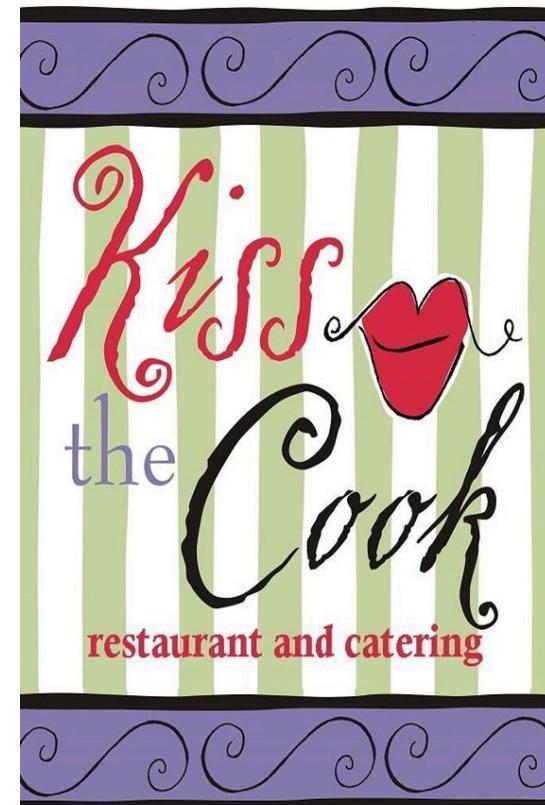
There is a long story behind the **moose head** above the desk. It was a bull moose...and technically could still be a bull moose after its antlers were shed...however, the director is electing to call it a "cow" moose and anyone who gets the humor in all that should be thankful to a great social studies teacher somewhere. The director's teacher was Dr. Flowers. I appreciate the "**new moose for Bruce**" that the cast got me! It is safe in the apartment away from the dangers of the theater.

The director is not a fan of cats, but this one, **Miss Dusti**, is quite sneaky. Eventhough she is sleeping...at least we think she is...she does move around between acts. Keep an eye on her and all cats!

### CAST

#### Cast Members

Abby Brewster	.....	Donna Davis
Martha Brewster	.....	Debbie Haas
Mortimer Brewster	.....	Aaron Speaks
Elaine Harper	.....	Lauren King
Teddy Brewster	.....	Johnathon Mathis
Jonathan Brewster	.....	Thom Fielder
Dr. Einstein	.....	Lee Bennett
Officer O'Hara	.....	Chris Hughes
The Reverend Dr. Harper	.....	Matthew Richardson
Officer Brophy	.....	Renee Spence
Officer Klein	.....	Ashley Speaks
Lieutenant Rooney	.....	Scarlett Long
Mr. Witherspoon	.....	Ron Spence
Mr. Gibbs	.....	Ren Hoggard



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## WHO'S WHO

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### Donna Davis

*as Abby Brewster*

Donna teaches Spanish at Valley View High School. She loves the language and enjoys teaching it to others. She also has a passion for acting and has been quite active the last several years. She has had a part in over 35 productions, a few commercials, and even been an extra in a few movies. Some of the most memorable plays for her at FOA have been *Nutcracker*, *Father of the Bride*, *Frankenstein*, *The (Female) Odd Couple*, *the Wind in the Willows*, and more recently *Mamma Mia*. She also was in the Collins production of *The Man Who Came to Dinner*. This is her first GCFAC production!

Besides acting, Donna loves traveling. She has been to Mexico, Spain, France, Costa Rica, and Cuba. Next summer she will travel to Peru. A big accomplishment for her was that she and a girlfriend drove Route 66 from Chicago to Santa Monica (it took 2 summers). She thanks her daughter, Meridith, and son-in-law, Chris, and the rest of her family and friends who have been supportive.



### Debbie Haas

*as Martha Brewster*

Debbie Haas spent 27 years teaching at Westside School District and retired in 2016 after 31 years. She taught 6th grade science and literacy and was the RTI Coordinator for the middle school during her last five years. She has three grown children, Elizabeth, Katie, and Jackson. After marrying her husband, Chris, she gained two grown stepchildren and an 11-year old step daughter. She enjoys reading, sewing and traveling. Just this past summer, she visited Florida, Ohio, and the Big Apple, NYC! She has a little sewing business on the side and made a few costumes for the show. This is her debut performance.



### Aaron Speaks

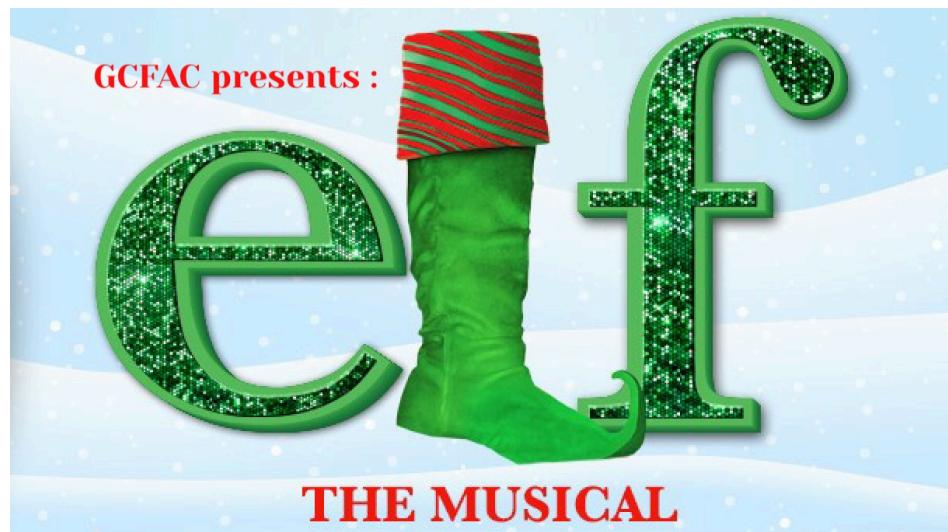
*as Mortimer Brewster*

Aaron has enjoyed performing on stage and working behind the scenes since high school. His favorite roles include Darry Curtis in *The Outsiders*, Banjo in *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, Fred Gayley in *Miracle on 34th Street*, and Lenny Ganz in *Rumors*. He has worked stage crew for many GCFAC summer musicals. Aaron would like to thank his beautiful and wonderfully supportive wife, his numerous friends, and family for their support.

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## Upcoming Production

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The Collins Theatre

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## WHO'S WHO

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### Lauren King

*as Elaine Harper*



Lauren King is an incoming Junior at Arkansas State University studying English with a minor in Theatre. With her degree, she plans to eventually write and act professionally. During her time at Greene County Tech High School as a member of Troupe 7614, Lauren was a chorus member in *Bye Bye Birdie*, a mission doll in *Guys and Dolls*, narrator in *Aladdin Jr.*, and Alex in *Stressed: a one act*. This will be Lauren's second show with GCFAC after last summer's *Mary Poppins* in which she debuted as a statue and chimney sweep. She is very excited to be bringing to life the role of Elaine Harper in *Arsenic and Old Lace* and further develop her skills as an artist.

### Thom Fielder

*as Jonathan Brewster*

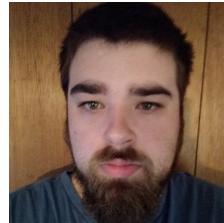


Thom has a BA in Theatre from the University of Michigan and a MFA in Directing/Performance from the University of Southern Mississippi-Hattiesburg. He has performed across the country from New York to Los Angeles including appearing in the National Tour and Broadway production of *The New York Shakespeare Festival's Pirates of Penzance*. He spent 2 years as the Artistic Director of Thunder Bay Theatre in Alpena, Michigan. Currently, he is an instructor at BRTC-Paragould.

For GCFAC he has directed *Oliver*, *The Music Man*, *Steele Magnolias*, *Li'l Abner*, *Beauty and The Beast*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *Annie*. For FOA in Jonesboro, audiences have seen him in *Treasure Island* (Long John Silver), *The Nutcracker Ballet* (Drosselmeyer), *Picnic* (Hal), *Li'l Abner* (Abner), *To Kill A Mockingbird* (Atticus Finch), *Annie* (Daddy Warbucks), and *Rumors* (Lenny) . He has directed *Harold and The Purple Crayon*, *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory*, and *Oliver* for the FOA.

### Johnathon Mathis

*as Teddy Brewster*

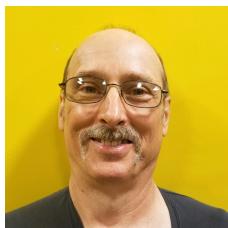


Johnathon Mathis has been in several productions over the years including: *The Hobbit* (Bombur - his favorite role), *Fools*, *Snow White*, and many more. When not in the theatre he enjoys long walks on moonlit beaches. Johnathan has an infant son, Sorin Jace Mathis. He is a content creator and streamer on Mixer.com and plays music in his free time.

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## WHO'S WHO

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### Lee Bennett

*as Dr. Einstein*

The theater and Lee go way back...all the way back to 1976! Lee just LOVES Arsenic and Old Lace. He has rehearsed it FOUR TIMES as FOUR different characters. Once as Teddy. Once as Jonathan. Once as O'Hara...and as Einstein in this production. However, he has only performed it...assuming all goes well...three times. One of the productions was canceled due to a bomb threat. Lee has also played in *South Pacific*, *Hello Dolly*, and *Camelot* (Pelinor). He's glad you're here and hopes you enjoy the show.



### Chris Hughes

*as Officer O'Hara*

Chris Hughes has spent his adult life secretly fighting crime while wearing a cow costume. He has rescued kittens from trees and fought off rattle-headed-copper-moccasins left handed while at the same time assembling the Mona Lisa with Legos. He has been in *Godspell* (Jesus) and *Our Town* (George Gibbs). The family CEO, Rachel, has kept him in line for the last 17 years. This is the 4th time in 17 years that she has seen his chin! He is very proud of his two sons Isaac and Alex who are in the GCT Band.



### Matthew Richardson

*as The Reverend Dr. Harper*

Matthew Richardson is a therapist and the Program Director at Dacus Residential Treatment Center. He is also the Deacon-in-charge at All Saints' Episcopal Church. In his spare time, he enjoys working with the Paragould Predators 2010-11 soccer team. He would like to thank his wife, Jessica, for her endless patience and support. He would also like to thank his daughter, Penny, for encouraging him to follow in her footsteps and take the stage for the first time.



### Renee Spence

*as Officer Brophy*

Renee Spence is a young lady who started theater in 2016 with her first role being the narrator in an original GCFAC production of *Snow White*. Since then, she has been involved in theater and has enjoyed herself immensely. Recently, she was the AD of *Winnie the Pooh* and volunteered doing props and set for the *Seussical Jr.* summer camp. She is the self-proclaimed coolest cop on the squad.

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The logo for Crowley's Ridge College. It features a green rectangular border. Inside, there is a graphic of two green pine trees on a green mountain outline. To the right of the graphic, the text "CROWLEY'S RIDGE COLLEGE" is written in a serif font. To the right of the college name is a 3x3 grid of nine colored squares, each containing a white icon representing a fine arts discipline: a paintbrush, a camera, a mask, a musical note, a vase, a person reading, a film strip, a bass clef, and a set of three dice.

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## WHO'S WHO

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### Ashley Speaks

*as Officer Klein*

Ashley Speaks is a special education teacher at Paragould Junior High. Ashley has been involved with community theater since 2015. Her most notable performances were in *The Man Who Came to Dinner* (Maggie Cutler), *Cats* (Rumpleteazer), and *Winnie the Pooh* (Rabbit). She has also been in the ensembles of many GCFAC summer musicals. Ashley can be found herding her three cats or writing when she is not on stage. Ashley would like to thank her wonderful husband, family, and friends for all of their support through the years.



### Scarlett Long

*as Lieutenant Rooney*

Scarlett is a speech-therapist at the Greene County Tech Primary School. This will be her 35th year to work with these young students. Past participation in theater productions include *Diary of Anne Frank*, *Wonderland*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Les Miserables*, *And Then There Were None*, *Charlotte's Web*, *Greater Tuna*, *Miracle on 34th Street*, *Mary Poppins* and *Mamma Mia*. She enjoys meeting new faces in theater, working with friends, and learning new things with each production.



### Ron Spence

*as Mr. Witherspoon*

Ron is a chemical engineer at Viskase, Inc. in Osceola. He has been active in community theater for 5 years. He's been in many productions of the GCFAC, including *Miracle on 34th Street* (Macy/Halloran) and *Mary Poppins* (Von Hussler/Bear), as well as assistant director for *Charlotte's Web*. Most recently he was in the Clay County Fine Arts's production of *Farce of Nature* (D. Gene Wilburn). He would like to thank his wife Dawn, daughter Renee, and everyone else for their continued support and encouragement.



### Ren Hoggard

*as Mr. Gibbs*

Ren is 19 and is new to theatre in general. Her hobbies include drawing, painting, reading, and writing. She extends special thanks to the director for his patience and to her loved ones for their support.

## PRODUCTION WHO'S WHO

### Dr. Bruce Bryant

*Director*



Dr. Bruce Bryant is making his debut as a director for GCFAC. He just completed *Seussical* (Yertle the Turtle), his second appearance in a GCFAC production. He was also in *Miracle on 34th Street* (Kris Kringle) and was in FOA's production of *Beauty and the Beast* (Cogsworth). He has played in, been assistant director and directed shows at Center on the Square in Searcy (*Smoke on the Mountain*, *Rumors*, *The Fantasticks*, *My Three Angels*, and *Grease*). He has worked on television as an extra in the Hallmark movies, *Christmas at Graceland*, *Christmas at Graceland 2*, on the new NBC series, *Bluff City Law*, and on an upcoming Netflix series, *The Messiah*.

By day, he is the Vice-President for Academic Affairs at Crowley's Ridge College and also serves on the boards of the GCFAC and the Greene County Community Fund. He is married to his wife of 26 years, Lisa. They have two sons, Haydn and Mills, a daughter-in-law, Mary Hannah, and two dogs, Gigi and Lola.

### Shani Barnhill

*Assistant Director*



Shani Barnhill is trying her hand at directing by serving as the assistant director in this production. She just completed the role of Sour Kanga in GCFAC's production of *Seussical, the Musical*. She is a Speech Pathologist and Dyslexia Specialist at Greene County Tech Schools. She has been in many productions for the GCFAC including Tanya in *Mamma Mia*. Shani is very involved in music and childrens ministry at her church and likes to watch old movies in her spare time. She would like to thank her family and especially her husband Roger for all their support.



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## PHOTOS

