



# THE PLAYER

VOLUME XCIX, NUMBER 4

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

JANUARY 2010

## The Best Way to Start the Holidays

By Player D.C. Moons

The chilly December breeze on Jefferson Avenue didn't faze me; it only hurried me into the embrace of The Beautiful Lady, our beloved Players Playhouse. That familiar welcoming warmth was in there, the lobby full of cigar smoke, and laughter and friendly faces. Forget about the store sales and decorations that have been growing since before Halloween – the December Frolic is the official start of the Christmas holiday celebration season!

Christmas carols don't sound right to me until I hear them from the Players Chorus, and on this night **Players Chuck Steltenkamp, Tim Cordes, Bill Volz** and **Roy Jendrzewski**, all accompanied by **Player Earl Wolf** on the keyboard, were joined by soon-to-be-returning-member John McLaughlin. The Christmas spirit of fellowship and brotherhood was ably and enjoyably expressed in (reasonably good) musical harmony, and even included one of our little lost lambs. Good to hear you baa-a-a-ak, Johnny Mac!

The typical hustle and bustle and blather that precedes the curtain quickly gave way to **Player Tom Brandel** leading us in The Players' Song. Given the full, rich, and hearty rendition he sang, I can hardly believe it was his first time in twenty years. Well done, Brandel!

The first play of the evening, **Master Brain**, was originally a sketch on *Saturday Night Live*, but with minor tweaking of the script by the director, **Player Steven Flum**, it came delightfully to life on The Players' stage (on a Saturday night!). Sure, the SNL writers (and many others) saw Ronald Reagan as a befuddled party-puppet figurehead, but this time, they and Player Bill Champion gave him to us as a secretly brilliant powerhouse. Although British Prime Minister Margaret "Iron Pants Maggie" Thatcher once described Reagan as "...a haircut posing as a man", Bill got more than the pompadour right in bringing "The Gipper" back to life.

He played dumb on the Iran-Contra affair with a reporter (**Player Andrew Turnbull**), but when the reporter left he instantly morphed into "super-action president", barking orders at his aides, **Players Ben Galbo, Brian Bawol**, and **Robert Dodge**. He gave rapid-fire directives to **Player Ben Pugliese** as CIA Director William Casey, and had deliciously acid disdain for Chief of Staff Don Regan, ably suffered by **Player Pete Stenger** in his debut performance on The Players' stage.

The browbeaten staff and secret money-laundering map disappear, along with Reagan's steel-trap mind, when **Player Andrew Maltese** as the champion cookie-selling Girl Scout comes into the Oval Office for her picture with the President (the blonde pigtail wig was worth the price of a ticket). The old "Ah, we-e-ll.." Ronnie is back, but it's all an act! Brilliant! Both he and Bill Champion are better actors than any of us thought!

And where would any White House photo op be without the familiar

tuxedo and red dress? Look! It's world-infamous Obama party-crashers Michael Salahi and her husband Buttwipe! **Players Mark Habel** and **Chris Nesi** slithered onstage, an addendum to the script, in what may be one of Habel's cheesiest gags and greatest groaners of all his Willie Award-worthy stunts (of course, he claimed it was all Ben Galbo's idea). This from a man described by **Player Tom Sloan** as "...a God of the stage..." I'm certain Sloan was referring to the way Mark slaves over set preparation, not his actual live performances.

Reagan even puts it on a little for his old pal Jimmy Stewart (**Player Chris Austin**, an actor playing an actor in front of an actual acting attorney playing an actor trying to act like the president and putting on an act). He gets annoyed when Jimmy won't take his cue and leave, and finally has the Secret Service drag him out while Stewart protests, "You know, Dutch, you've changed! You've turned into a real jerk!" Yeah, Jimmy, but he can apparently speak Arabic and German a lot better than you can!

This show was cute, slick, and funny, and I personally was quite tickled to see the famous red phone up there on Abraham Lincoln's desk (thanks, Bob-O!). I wouldn't hesitate to bring guests to see this laugh-a-minute show in May. It was delightful, surprising and fun, just as Christmas is supposed to be, and thus was an excellent piece to lead off a December Frolic.

The second show was of a decidedly different nature, but I happen to enjoy a diverse selection of material at a Frolic. **The Eternal Brunch** was **Player Ken Reid**'s directing debut, and he added to his own misery by playing the lead role in his own play. Bet you won't inflict that on yourself again, will you, Ken? He portrayed Harold, sharing brunch with his wife Judith (**Player Tom Diffendal**, displaying ever-so-svelte-yet-matronly biceps). They were seated at a table at Janet's Lunch, and Harold was wearing a radioactive neon lime-green polo shirt, which Habel described as being "...about as Grosse Pointe-y as you can get without smelling like Lake St.Clair".

It seems Harold is feeling his age rather acutely, and isn't hesitant to tell Judith about his varied health problems, including his lack of 'back pressure'. To alleviate her husband's concern about the flaccid condition of his sphincter, Judith has him stand up and engage in a short session of butt calisthenics. Great grimacing and genuine laughter about a decidedly uncomfortable subject – that, my friends, is good directing. Director Reid even treated us to **Players John Daly** and **Fuzz Corey** sitting at a table in the back. Those weren't just two coffee-swilling, hash browns-gobbling, newspaper-reading lazy, hung-over yachtsmen! They were living scenery! They were, to indulge in theatrical parlance, supernumeraries! Who the hell told Ken Reid he was allowed to direct like a professional? At The Players!?!?

The rather dreary subject of mortality and the bleak prospect of no life after death are lightened up by the appearance of their waitress Tanya, deftly put forth by **Player Andrew Maltese**. (Two drag roles, in two shows, at the same Frolic? Who does this guy think he is, Diffendal? Habel? Denne Osgood?) Single mother Tanya doesn't worry much about "the end"; she's making the present count by enjoying the time she spends in the park with her baby boy Jeremy. (If Chris Nesi had directed this show, we'd have seen Jeremy Schultz or Eric Christian onstage in a stroller, wearing a diaper and crying.)

Although Harold sees the light at the end of the tunnel as an onrushing train, Judith and Tanya are there to remind him that living in the moment and enjoying it, instead of ruining it by worrying about it, is what life is truly all about. Live it; don't lament the inevitable end of it. At the end of the show, Harold takes a taste of Judith's strawberry waffles, disregarding his own previous admonition about "too many carbs, too much sugar", before suggesting that they go visit the park, and maybe give Tanya's son Jeremy a little gift if they see him there.

Some might have regarded this show as a little dark, but that's the fault of the lighting committee, not the director or playwright (Ow! Bad Pun! Down, boy!). For me, the message was that we only get to share a scant few Christmases with those we love (too few days at all, for that matter), so don't darken them with drear and dread – live, love, find all the joy you can, and spread it around, especially at Christmastime. And in conveying that message, Diffendal was definitely the glue that brought and held this show together. Nice job, Tom.

If ever we needed a show to hammer home what Christmas is supposed to be about, then the third show certainly nailed it. *A Case of Good Intentions*, directed by **Player Tom Conley**, was not just another of his Irish stories. Set (to great surprise) in an Irish pub on Christmas Eve, this show gave **Player Leon Hart**, in the lead role as Dr. Talbot, the opportunity to showcase his acting skills, and he didn't waste it. Leon had firm but gentle control of the pace, gave everyone else the room the focus their characters required, and didn't overdo it at any point in the show. Of course, it's easy to keep everybody else in line when you're six-foot-nineteen.

Before describing the rest of the show, I must commend director Conley and the Scripts and Casting committee for selecting this material. The interplay was snappy, and plenty of laughs with lines layering over each other. Callbacks, lines that refer back to previous lines, made the humor build along with the characterizations. I could feel the style of Assistant Director Player Bill Volz woven throughout.

In the nearly snowed-in little pub we find barmaid Molly (**Player Chris Nesi**) handing out a few after-hours libations to Mrs. Kathleen O'Leary (**Player Chris Monley**), Dr. Talbot and Dai 'Turkey' Murphy (**Player Jim Foran**). We learn of Dr. Talbot's son David, gone five years in South America; in talking about him, we realize that all Dr. Talbot's geniality is an attempt to hide his lingering sadness.

We come to know of the heartbreak endured by pub owner Mrs. O'Leary, over the promising ballet career lost to arthritis, and the death of her husband Liam (Molly's father). We hear a note of

wistfulness when Molly speaks of him, so we know her playful banter with the others is a brave façade. Hard-working turkey farmer Dai, to everyone's surprise, writes poetry (and dreams of owning an ostrich farm) and hopes to settle down someday (with a certain girl in town he won't name). When Sergeant Morris (**Player Chuck Steltenkamp**) arrives, we come to find that his stutter cost him his long-desired promotion to Inspector. These were all far richer characterizations than one might think possible in such a short play, but the cast gave us warmth and depth, but with engaging humor and a brisk pace. This was a very well-acted show.

All this is the setup for the entrance of Seamus McManus (**Player Jim Turnbull**), his rather dowdy suitcase offset by his resplendent canary-yellow tweed blazer. As he sips his brandy, he listens attentively, getting to know a little about each of the others, but saying mysteriously little. When he leaves without his case, they fear it contains a bomb, but it turns out only to hold envelopes, one addressed to each of them, containing a short poem.

The poems are read aloud, and in accordance with their prophesies, Sergeant Morris loses his stutter, Mrs. O'Leary's arthritis disappears as she begins to dance, and Dai and Molly reveal the fondness they have always had for each other. There is no poem for Dr. Talbot, but with a knock on the door, his son David (**Player Tom Sloan**), long thought dead, walks into his father's arms. As the denizens of the pub embrace, rejoicing in their Christmas miracles, the enigmatic Seamus McManus glides in. He picks up the forgotten satchel, and stops at the door, with an impish smile, to tell the audience, "Just a simple case of good intentions." This sweet little play finished with whipped cream and a Turnbull cherry on top. What a perfectly wonderful show for December!

Hard-working **Player Henry Nelson** then served up a hearty repast of Scottish meat pies, mashed potatoes and crunchy salad, which we all devoured while listening to the incomparable **Player Jim Turnbull** bring tears to our eyes once again with *A Selkirk Christmas*. It would seem that every single member of The Players knows this touching story by now, but here's the review-requisite recap:...

*(Editors note: Due to lack of available space, and the inability of Microsoft Publisher to create a font small enough to include the reviewer's eleven-paragraph "recap" of A Selkirk Christmas on these two pages, it is suggested that interested parties speak directly with Player Moons for his first-hand recounting of Jim's now-classic tale.)*

...That, my friends, is what Christmas is REALLY all about – not the gifts you get, but the joy you give, and joy is what Producer **Player Bob O'Leary** and all my fellow Players gave me for Christmas this year. If you missed the December Frolic in 2009, don't miss it in 2010!

With Best Wishes and Warmest Regards,

Player D.C. Moons

***Pre-Frolic Dinner***  
*For the location and details regarding February's pre-Frolic dinner, please turn to page 6.*

### **Frolic 581**

Produced by Player Steven Flum  
Saturday, 6 February 2010

### **Elvis of Nazareth**

by Jay Huling

Setting: The reception area of Sun Records, the home of the Memphis Recording Service.

Time: The summer of 1953

Directed by Player Andrew Turnbull

The Young Elvis .....	Player Bob Dodge
Marion.....	Player Chris Nesi
Moses .....	Player Tim Cordes
King Solomon .....	Player Jim Turnbull
Roman Centurion .....	Player Andrew Turnbull
Jesus of Nazareth .....	Player Andrew Maltese

### **Package Deal**

by Frederick Stroppel

Setting: A very important restaurant in Los Angeles

Directed posthumously by Player Bill Fitzpatrick

Starla Simmons .....	Player Thomas Diffendal
Cody Jacobsen .....	Player Larry Smith

### **The Best Warm Beer in Brooklyn**

by Jason Milligan

Setting: A small neighborhood bar in Brooklyn, NY

Time: The Present

Directed by Player Henry Nelson

Joey .....	Player Tom Sloan
Eddie .....	Player Brian Bawol
Tex .....	Player Stuart Johnson

### **Afterglow**

*The Rise and Fall of Detroit's Vanguard Theater*

~ Reflections from Founder Larry Charfoos ~

**A Letter from the Editor**

With the recent changing of the guard, many of you may be fearful that *The Player*, beloved anchor of the Playhouse that it has always been, will be converted into a reflection of its new editor: childish and smelly. Please allow me to assure you that, as easily as that transformation could be achieved, it will never happen. From time to time though, with deadlines to meet and pages to fill, an article or announcement may slip through that is grammatically displeasing, or whose tongue-in-cheek humor is questionable. I am hopeful that by remembering to take the occasional moment to ask myself *WWPD*, the errors and faux pas will be few and far between. My goal is for *The Player* to continue to be informative, amusing, professionally assembled, and a publication which any Player would be proud to share with his friends and relatives. With your criticisms, suggestions, written contributions and (not least important) your patience and support, I am confident that my goal will be achieved. Nunquam Renig. — CGM

**HERE'S YOUR CUE**

*"When my cue comes, call me and I will answer."*

**WANTED: PRODUCERS**

For March & April.  
Contact Bob O'Leary at  
248-765-0667 or [roleary@solaronicsusa.com](mailto:roleary@solaronicsusa.com)

**THE PLAYERS' PLAYHOUSE WISH LIST**

We continue with the "Players' Playhouse Wish List." We hope it will generate needed funds and/or items to benefit our "Beautiful Lady." Please peruse the list and see how you may fulfill the wishes of your club! To whom it matters, please be reminded that all donations, cash or useful items are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowable by law.

If any Player has a suggestion for inclusion to the Wish List, please contact any Board member.

Wish	Est. Cost	Donations to Date
Smoke door cupola- flashing	\$7,000	0
Roof Repairs	\$22,000	\$21,000
Stage-two Side Mural restoration	\$3,600	0
Backstage air compressor, electrical and piping connections	\$600	0

**Wow!!! WHAT A DEAL!**

Did you know that when you sponsor a new Member, you will receive a credit on your dues in the amount of the initiation fee paid by the new member? Currently the initiation fee for senior and junior active members is \$150. There is no limit to the number of new members that you sponsor. This is a great way to save money and keep the Players a vibrant and financially sound club. If you're especially generous you can donate the credit to one of the abundant wish list items. The sky's the limit, so let's get started. 🍀

**Notes From Players...**

**Sloane Bella McGuire** was born December 9, 2009. She was born 7 lbs 3.3 oz; and 21 inches long (a carbon copy of her big sister). She is growing strong already and has her father's appetite. (Uh-oh...) —MM

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The Board of Governors and the membership at large would like to thank the Gourmet Group for their more than generous gift of \$20,000 for the repairs of the various roof surfaces above our Playhouse. This type of donation is critical to help us get ready for our 100<sup>th</sup> season. We have already had the dressing room roof torn off, leveled and replaced. Our dressing rooms are now leak-free thanks to the D.J. Maltese Corporation (low bidder-honestly) and their subcontractors! Player Andrew Maltese personally oversaw this project even though he was running a 102 degree temperature. Thanks, Andrew, for looking out for our interests. It really paid off during those wicked rain storms over the Christmas Holiday. The stage roof is next. The Gourmet Group's stipulation is that the roof projects must be completed before the 2010 Annual Meeting at Players or the balance is forfeited. So it is written...so it shall be done! —TW

Players Office Phone: 313.259.3385  
Players Office Fax: 313.259.0932  
Email: [office@playersdetroit.org](mailto:office@playersdetroit.org)

**Traffic Hour:**

5:00 PM Monday, February 8, 2010  
followed by a production meeting for directors and stage personnel at 6:00PM.

**WHERE'S THE CALENDAR?**

It's on line! On the new Players' web site! Go to [www.playersdetroit.org](http://www.playersdetroit.org). Still a work in progress, but reviews have been positive! Look elsewhere for the "411."

[HTTP://PLAYERSDETROIT.ORG](http://PLAYERSDETROIT.ORG)

Don't forget about the new web site! Access/update your profile; read about the latest news and events; download the latest "The Player" online; see schedules for plays and dress rehearsals; check out and upload pictures from various functions; see where pre-frolic dinners will be and get directions; download events to your outlook calendar!

As a member of The Players, you have the ability to stay in touch with the latest news and updates going on within our organization. You can see this information online, real-time, with the click of a few buttons. As a member, you can access your profile and get the latest updates right from your computer. Once you are a registered web site user, your permissions will be approved by a site administrator and these permissions will give you access and functionality to various pages within the site. Go to <http://playersdetroit.org> and see it today!



**THE PLAYERS**  
Presented



**The 2010**  
**Millionaires' Party!**

**Saturday, January 16, 2010**

**Doors Opened at 7:00 PM**

**Gaming was from 8:00 pm to 12:00 am**

You contacted the Office for Reservations! (313) 259-3385

[office@playersdetroit.org](mailto:office@playersdetroit.org)

**\$25.00 in advance, \$30.00 at the Door!**

Dress: Evening Attire.

(For Players, of course, it was "Black Tie")

Live Music! Dancing!

Silent Auction! Tin Can Raffle! 50/50 Raffles!

Black Jack! Roulette! Wheel of Luck!

Texas Hold 'em!

Food, Beer, Wine!

Most of you didn't miss out on this great Players Tradition!

You brought the significant other! You brought friends!

**HERE'S YOUR CUE (Continued)****February Pre-Frolic Dinner**

In our quest to visit some of Detroit's venerable dining establishments this season, the February 6 pre-Frolic gathering will occur at **Cliff Bell's**.

In its heyday, **Cliff Bell's** was a popular chop house/supper club frequented by pre- and après theater crowds. The late Player Diamond Phillips owned the club in his final years. It is now extremely popular for its cuisine, beautiful 1930's ambience and great live music.

You know the routine: dinner, including tax and tip (but not drinks) is \$30.00. Valet parking is available, as is free street parking. Cliff Bell's is located at 2030 Park Avenue between Elizabeth and Grand Circus Park. If you get lost, call there @ 313-961-2543. Arrive at 5:30 for cocktails, sit down to dinner at 6:30.

Call the Players Club to let us know how many will be attending @ 313-259-3385. — TJB

**Mark your Calendars for the 2010 Family Invitational!**

The Players bi-annual **Family Invitational** will take place at 10:00 on the morning of the March Frolic. The event will feature two short family-friendly plays and music by Players Henry Nelson and Craig White. Players are encourage to bring their spouses, parents, children and friends. We will provide coffee, juice, bagels and doughnuts. Attire is "Saturday Morning Casual". Reservations will be open after the February Frolic. —JLD

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**BRANDY & CIGARS RETURNS!!!**

After the great success of the Board's post-December Frolic "Brandy & Cigars in the Founders' Room", Player Gary Dion asked if he could sponsor one in February. The Board said "Hell Yes!" He will be sponsoring it through his Company, Cedar Ridge Custom Woodworking (*to say thanks for choosing CRCW to rebuild/restore the office at Players*). Go on up after the festivities are done downstairs and enjoy a snoot and a cigar on "the sponsor"! Thanks, Gary, The office looks awesome!

p.s. We may be looking for future "sponsors". — TW

**Thank you, all Tree Trimmers!**

The Tree Trimming Party returned this year and I would like to thank Chuck and Susan Steltenkamp, Drew and Melissa Maltese, Jim and Sandra Turnbull and my own bride Alicia for making the trip to down to Deck the Halls. The Founders' Room looked great and was enjoyed by all at the Christmas Party. Many hands made for light work, Christmas light work that is. — AT

**THE PLAYER, VOLUME XCIX, NUMBER 4,  
JANUARY 2010**

THE PLAYER ... is published monthly from September to April, with *sometimes* a combined December/January issue and *sometimes* a summer issue. The views expressed herein are those of the respective authors and editor and not necessarily those of The Players. Comments may be made to, and back issues may be available from the office, (313)259-3385 or send an inquiry to [ThePlayer@playersdetroit.org](mailto:ThePlayer@playersdetroit.org). THE PLAYER is available on the web at [www.playersdetroit.org](http://www.playersdetroit.org). We welcome your contributions and comments.

**Reminders:**

- Invite a friend to the Playhouse for a good time
- Plan on attending the February Frolic (see page 3 for further details).
- Invite a friend to join The Players
- Visit The Players' website at [www.playersdetroit.org](http://www.playersdetroit.org) and update your info.
- Bring your guests to meet the BOG between the first and second show of the Frolic!

## From “Detroit on Stage—The Players Club 1910-2005” By Marijean Levering

The Playhouse would open 10 December 1925 with a performance for members only, and performances for family and friends to show off their new home were scheduled for 11 and 12 December. Everyone pitched in. The Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts donated materials from their own stage, and wives of the board of governors presented the curtain and valance for the new theatre.

*Doing Stratford* was so popular that copies of the music were sold at the following May show. Player C. Hayward Murphy underwrote the cost of printing, and Weeks and Holliday agreed to donate any profits back to The Players. One of the songs from the score, “When the Day Is Done,” with lyrics by Weeks and music by Holliday, later became the official Players’ song in January 1952 (see chorus that follows). Bill Holliday passed away in 1926 of “intestinal influenza,” barely six months after the Playhouse opened, but his song is sung at the start of every frolic, so he lives on at The Players.

“WHEN THE DAY IS DONE”

*by Players Al Weeks and Bill Holliday*

When the day is done, with the setting sun,  
For a friendly pipe then we long,  
All of us gather here and we make good cheer,  
With a mug of beer and a rousing song.

Though, the cold winds blow over drifting snow,  
All our troubles disappear.  
Sorrows make an end when you toast a friend,  
In a mug of foaming beer.

Reprinted from Levering, Marijean / Detroit on Stage: The Players Club, 1910-2005  
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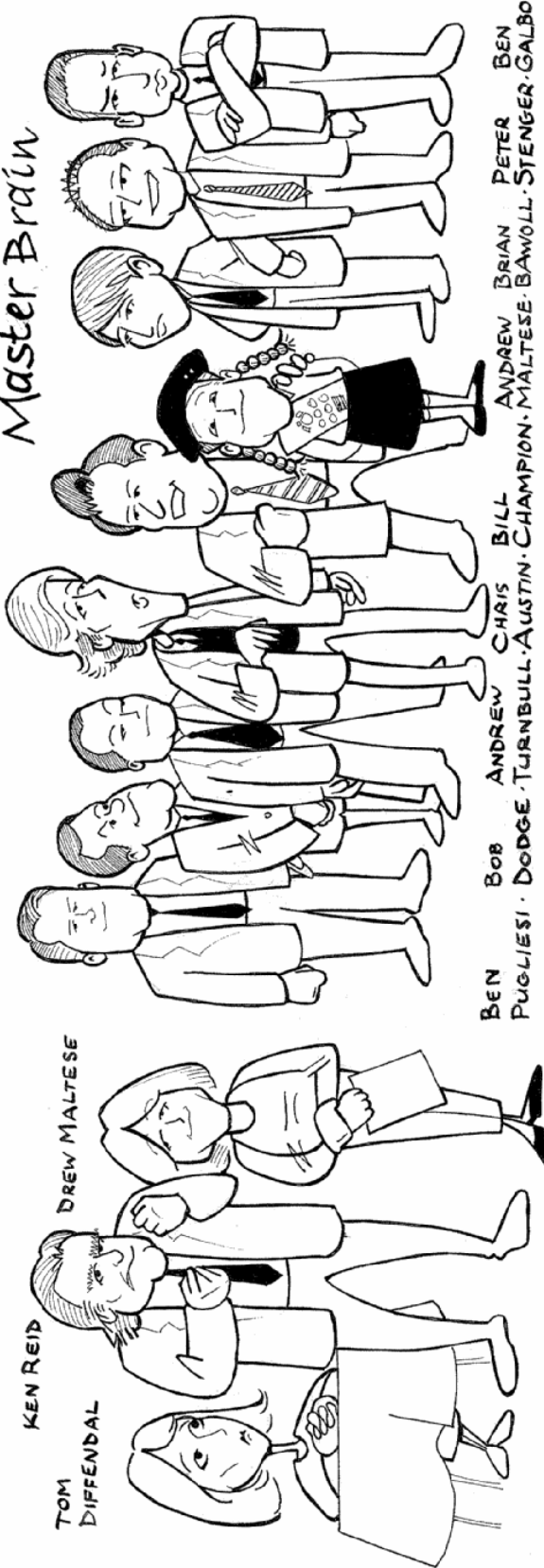
## The Players Handbook

The idea of creating “**The Players Handbook...everything you already know about Players but always wanted to see in writing**” was good. The fact that it is actually coming to fruition is nothing short of brilliant. This new column will include “stuff” about Players that we think everybody knows but everyone really doesn’t. The so-called institutional memory is usually the knowledge known only to long-standing committee chairmen. This should bring it out into the open. Although this first entry happens to begin with the letter A, topic headings will not necessarily be published in *The Player* in alphabetical order. Future topics may (or will) include Lobby Noise, Pre-Frolic Dinners, Dress Code, et cetera. Please e-mail your ideas for inclusion to any Board member.

### Alcohol

**Shouldn’t be a problem here. We are a gentlemen’s club and have a long-standing reputation for having a convivial bar...a bar where you can get not one but three superb experimental beers from brewers who are our own members. Yum! But what about the gin and the bourbon and the vodka and the rum, the scotch and the single malt? There was a time when the hard stuff was forbidden altogether. Now it has become (for some) a congratulatory quaff in the dressing room after their play is over. Keep it there. Hard stuff is not welcome at the tables in the Playhouse, nor at the bar after our productions. You’ll find all you want at the Traffic Hour on the Monday following the Frolics. —JT**

Master Brain



KEN REID

TOM  
DIFFENDAL

DREW MALTESE

BEN  
PUGLIESI · BOB  
ANDREW · CHRIS  
TURNBULL · AUSTIN ·  
CHAMPION · MALTESE ·  
BRAWOLL · STENGER ·  
GALBO

The Eternal Brunch



A Case of Good Intentions

FROLIC #81  
6 DECEMBER 2009  
MONLEY

THOMAS SLOAN · CHRISTOPHER MONLEY · JIM TURNBULL · CHRIS NESI · CHUCK STELTENKAMP · LEON HART · JIM FORAN