

# THE ROUGHIAN

Fall (Solstice? What Solstice?) 2009

A Quarterly Newsletter of Theatre in the Rough



*Wise Men & Angels in the new sanctuary at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church. From left to right, Caspar, (with Damon Stuebner's arm) Mother Hunter Silides, Joseph (with Peter Freer's elbow), the angel Gabriel (with Eddie Jones below), the baby Jesus (with Aaron Elmore right behind him), Mary (with Ann Gifford peeking out), Katie Jensen, Melchior (with Matt Talley attached, behind whom are Alyssa White, the Elephant and the very best Horse), and Balthazar (Jon Pollard attached, just out of frame). Photo by Sharon Gaiptman.*

## PUPPET CHRISTMAS

### A NEW THEATRE IN THE ROUGH / HOLY TRINITY JOINT VENTURE

At very long last, worship returned to Fourth & Gold downtown on the Fourth Sunday in Advent, December 20, 2009. Three days prior, however, the new sanctuary was used as a rehearsal space for *Shepherds*, *Wise Men & Angels*, our latest holiday and puppet production, offered free to the public, in collaboration with the Youth Group at Holy Trinity.

It was a great honor to be a part of the very first gathering to take place on that ground in some years. While much credit for this wonderful event must go to the generosity of Father George and Mother Hunter Silides and the vision of co-artistic directors Aaron Elmore and Katie Jensen, the biggest

tips-of-the-hat go to the many eager volunteers who gathered night after night to cut, stitch, rip paper, cut cardboard and to glue and glue and glue. (For more about the puppet design and construction, see page 2.)

It was a thrilling couple of weeks leading up to our opening. Shows during the holidays, while rewarding, are never easy. New shows aren't either. This one was both.

The schedule was tight. Proofs of concept on the armatures and mechanics of the puppets had to be done in October, while *Complete Works* was still running. Thanks to the volunteers, by Thanksgiving we had the main structures for all the people pup-

*(continued on page 3)*

## NEW HOME UPDATE:

### TR IS HALF WAY HOME!

Between our First Friday in the Rough Auction, the generous additional gifts from many of you, and a large new gift from the Blackwell Foundation, this fall has seen great strides with the New Home Fund. With cash and pledges now in excess of \$85,150, we are now well past the half way point on our quest for \$150,000.

As one supporter very aptly put it, "Theatre in the Rough continues to inspire people with its audacious, but now realistic, plan for an Elizabethan theatre in downtown Juneau!"

### RASMUSON GRANTS

Congratulations are due to our partners at Holy Trinity Church for their Rasmuson Foundation contingency grant in the amount of \$500,000. This was one of the largest grants of its kind awarded by the Rasmuson this year. The money will help complete the community parts of the new facilities including our beloved McPhetres Hall. Provided Holy Trinity can show they have the rest of their fund-raising in place, this impressive sum will be theirs.

Last summer, when it was uncertain whether the Rasmuson Foundation would award any large grants this year, TR applied to the Rasmuson for a small, \$18,000 grant for a lighting system. In light of Holy Trinity's major award for this project and not wanting to ask for money twice for the same thing (HT's grant budget already includes a lighting system), Theatre in the Rough has withdrawn its \$18,000 request.

Since so much has been achieved thus far, both TR and HT have good hope, that more individuals, as well as statewide and national foundations, will be interested in becoming a part of this great effort in the coming year.

# FROM THE SKETCHBOOK

December's collaboration with Holy Trinity on the Christmas Pageant has been incubating since Aaron played the goat in last spring's *Oh Lovely Glowworm* at Perseverance Theatre. Puppets seemed a perfect way to unite all of the Christmas story's elements (angels, animals, people) as well as keeping the mystery of this very familiar story fresh. Doing something slightly spectacular also seemed a great way to bring people together in the new building.

This was a giant undertaking, requiring a dozen people-puppet heads and twenty-four people-puppet hands, seven large animals, six wings, plus clothes and skins for all. The only way to build all this was to engage a large and continuously changing group of volunteers. This meant the puppets had to be made from materials that could be worked easily and quickly by unskilled hands. Paper maché and hand sewing were used wherever possible.

All the adult people puppets are built on an armature that was designed by Aaron and manufactured, largely by Phil Shempf, out of red cedar and cardboard. Coat hanger wire, rubber bands and fish weights make up further core components. Phil also engineered the shoulder joints for the angels so that their arms, though unmoving, could be positioned just so.

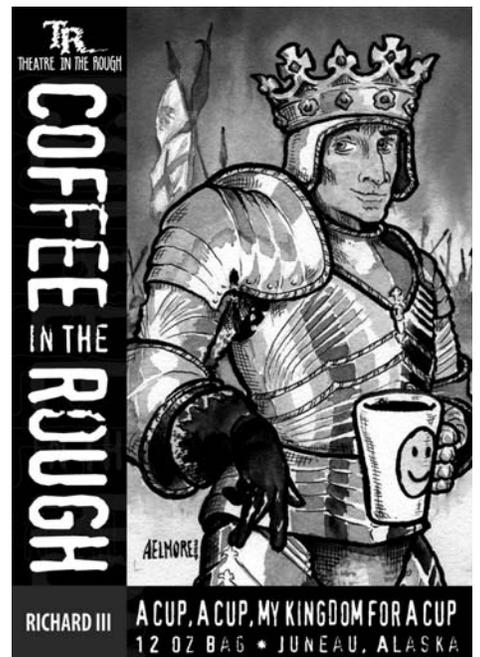
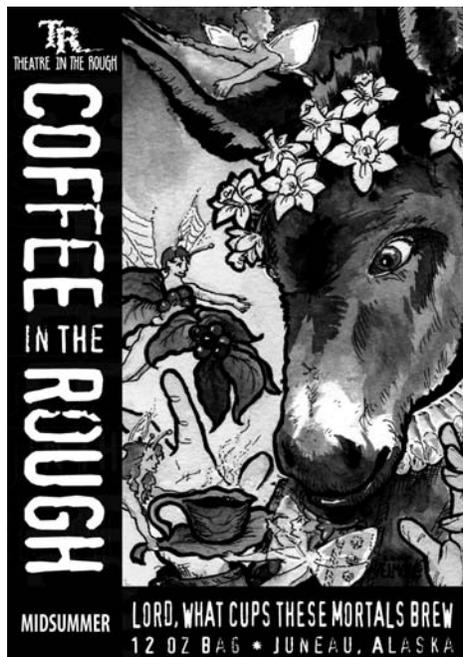
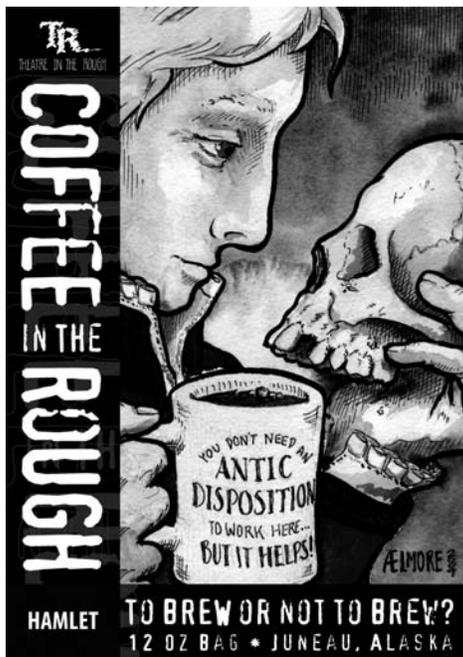
*Puppet and costume designs, from lower left to upper right: a shepherd; the wise man, Balthazar; Mary; and the angel Gabriel.*



For the angels, also, weight was a constant concern, so their tunics were made from custom pleated 5mm china silk trimmed with wire edged ribbon. This gives them a sense of volume and movement, even when they are still. The wings are double thick cardboard, but the centers are cut out and they are skinned in paper so we could save a few more ounces.

The large animals, like the elephant, also needed to be light but strong. Peter Freer scored a cache of 1" thick cardboard which, once the edges were reinforced, worked very well for animal parts.

Understandably, some people have asked why the puppet's eyes are empty. Some find them a bit creepy. Words like "Roswell" come up. To these people, we ask they bear in mind that puppets are miniature, semi-living creatures that are often a bit creepy, with or without eyes. We tried a number of solutions. All of them made the problem worse. We decided, "No eyes."



# IT'S NOW AT RAINBOW FOODS

Heritage Coffee Company continues to support Theatre in the Rough with their incredible Coffee in the Rough.

Now David Ottoson and Rainbow Foods are joining in to keep Coffee in the Rough available between shows. Better than that, they are selling it for the same price and are passing all the profits on to us and the New Home Fund. Thank you, Rainbow!

Supplies run low because we are ordering in small batches. This is a new venture for us and we are still trying to gauge how much you Roughians will need. If you go to Rainbow and find no Coffee in the Rough, please don't blame them! We will try our best to get more to them within a week. Also, we hope soon to make it available through [www.theatreintherough.org](http://www.theatreintherough.org).

Aaron has now completed three label designs in the series of twelve. January's label will feature the Dromio's from The Comedy of Errors.

Sales have netted over \$1500 so far. All proceeds from the sale of Coffee in the Rough go toward the New Home Fund and the finishing and furnishing of the New McPhetres Hall.

## PUPPETS

(continued from page 1)

pets and most of the animals as well. But none of them were finished.

The venue wasn't finished either. We've been late getting into a space before but never have we wondered if we would be allowed in at all. Thanks to the heroic efforts of HT's general contractor, SRI, and the city inspectors, a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy was awarded nearly 4 hours before our final rehearsal began the day before we opened. Hardly even exciting.

In the end, transformation. It is likely that this puppet pageant will become an annual offering of Holy Trinity and Theatre in the Rough. The puppets were lovely, the moments they made were transporting and the crowds they gathered were joyful and enthusiastic. This first time out, though, will always hold a special place in the hearts of all who helped or came to see.

For all, our thanks.

## NOTES ON CAESAR

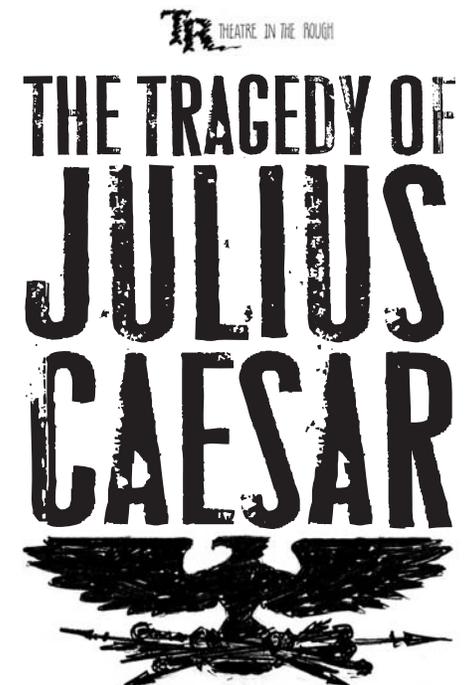
As we stand on the brink of rehearsals, unique aspects of this play are emerging.

First, Shakespeare's plays nearly always center on some blood relationship. Lear and his daughters, Henry IV and his son, Antipholus and his brother: these relationships drive their stories forward. No such relationship even exists in *Caesar*. There are two marriages and one adopted heir. That's it.

Further, mothers are strangely non-existent in this play. As in many fairy tales, mothers are conspicuously absent throughout the canon but in *Caesar* only one character, Cassius, even mentions his mother. He is not very complimentary.

Finally, there is not one important relationship in which the power is equal. OK, the citizens. But the higher-ups are all competing on some level.

How these facts will effect the production will be discovered in the weeks to come but it is exciting stuff to start with.



by William Shakespeare  
**Feb. 19 to Mar. 14, 2010 @**  
**Alaska Territorial Hall**

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peace & joy  
of the turning year  
be yours.



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