

The Torch Bearers

by George Kelly

Director:	Mark Cole
Scene & Lighting Designer:	Tim Baumgartner
Costume Designer:	Kitty Macey
Sound Designer:	Steven Shull
Technical Director:	Johan Godwaldt
Costume Shop Supervisor:	Judy McCabe
Assistant Sound Designer:	Jennifer Poplarski*
Assistant Lighting Designer:	Chris Verschneider
Assistant to the Costume Designer:	Elias J. Gutierrez
Assistant Technical Director:	Tim Duffy
Stage Manager:	Alaina Parness*
Assistant Director:	Aaron Londraville
Assistant Stage Manager:	Melissa Maurer
Box Office Manager:	Kelly Cullinan
Dramaturg:	Dr. Jessica Hester
House Manager:	Jessica Montgomery

The Cast

(in order of appearance)

Jenny, a housemaid:	Katherine Boswell
Mr. Frederick Ritter:	Jeremy Waterman
Mrs. Paula Ritter:	Kim Greenawalt
Mrs. J. Duro Pampinelli:	Sara Weiler*
Mr. Spindler:	Ryan Santiago*
Mrs. Eleanor “Nelly” Fell:	Kimberly Saunders
Mr. Huxley Hossefrosse:	Daniel Williams*
Teddy Spearing:	Jacob Luria
Mr. Ralph Twiller:	Knate Roy*
Miss Florence McCrickett:	Jessica Quindlen
Mr. Stage Manager:	Josh Gadek
Mrs. Clara Sheppard:	Natifa Adolphus

* Indicates membership in Alpha Psi Omega, the National Honorary Dramatics Fraternity.

The Setting

Act One

The home of Mr. and Mrs. Ritter, in a small town not far from New York City, an evening in early November, 1922.

Act Two

Scene One: The next evening, back stage at Horticultural Hall
Scene Two: Backstage at Horticultural Hall, a few minutes later.

The Torch Bearers is performed with one intermission of 15 minutes. The playing time is approximately two hours, including intermission.

Refreshments are available for purchase in the lobby.

Dramaturg’s Notes

In the 1920s, American theatre was in the midst of a cultural revolution, with communities throughout the country taking charge of their own theatrical experiences. The Little Theatre Movement began in 1912, when several theatre companies emerged in urban areas, most notably the Toy Theatre (Boston); the Chicago Little Theatre; the Provincetown Players (Massachusetts); the Neighborhood Playhouse (New York); the Washington Square Players (New York); and the Detroit Arts and Crafts Theatre. These companies rebelled against the commercialization of Broadway theatre, instead focusing on new, innovative plays emerging in both the United States and Europe. By 1917 there were over fifty such groups, many of them thriving in small communities. After 1920, these companies were indistinguishable from amateur community theatre groups. By 1925, almost 2000 groups were registered with the Drama League of America, which was founded to support local dramatics activities.

This is the theatrical landscape of *The Torch Bearers*—an amateur group of quirky personalities led by the self-appointed “professional,” Mrs. Pampinelli. Mrs. Pampinelli’s directing style was built on previous community-oriented theatre, but she is equally motivated by the shift in women’s rights in the 1920s. George Kelly wrote this play just two years after American women won the right to vote, and it is hard not to notice the way that Kelly’s women claim their independence. As Mrs. Pampinelli articulates, “Only remember this, Paula - there will be actresses when husbands are a thing of the past.”

Production and Run Crews

Master Electrician & Light Board Operator:	Josh MacDonald
Front of House Sound Mixer:	John Wolfson
Foley:	Kris Brandow
Deck/Fly Crew:	Courtney Bennett Kristine Bishal Amanda Squicciarini Tim Duffy John McCoy
Deck Carpenter:	Tim Duffy
Deck Electrician:	John McCoy
Prop Master:	Samuel-Graeme Austin
Prop Crew:	Courtney Bennett Kristine Bishal Sarah Sterling Amanda Squicciarini
Wardrobe Crew Chief:	Keegan Bushey
Wardrobe Crew:	Tim Duffy
Make-Up Crew Chief:	Carrie Pfaffenbach
Make-Up Crew:	Tara Eames Jessica Daniels Bill Pastella*
Paint Crew:	Charlie Smith*
Light Hang:	Desiree Kavanaugh Tim Duffy Kris Brandow Ariel Marcus John Wolfson Chris Verschneider Sarah Sterling Joshua MacDonald
Scene Construction:	Students in THT 110, THT 120, THT 121 and THT 300
Costume Construction:	Leah Fox Amanda Squicciarini Stephanie Martinez Ariel Marcus and Students in THT 110, THT 121, THT 122 and THT 300
Make-up Prep Crew:	Sara Weiler Jeremy Waterman
Publicity and Lobby Photography :	Jim Russell
<i>Torch Bearers</i> Graphic:	Colin Nekritz
Lobby Display Case:	Dr. Jessica Hester

Director's Notes

• In Brooks Atkinson's *Broadway*, he writes that the years between World War I and World War II were "bursting with energy and enterprise; the new dramatists, of whom there were many, and the people of the theatre were full of hope and fresh ideas and were enthusiastic about new styles of craftsmanship." Atkinson calls the 1920's (the decade when Kelly had his first Broadway success) as "The Giddy Times." There was a "youthful exuberance and confidence" in the writing. For Atkinson, Kelly was "the favored son of the incredulous twenties." He writes:

*George Kelly, a slender and agreeable young man...learned his craft as a vaudeville actor and sketch writer. The vaudeville discipline was formidable; every line and situation had to be in exactly the right place, and the parts had to be cast precisely. With vaudeville as background, he was acutely aware of the sprawling incompetence of amateur acting; and his first Broadway comedy, **The Torch Bearers**, satirized the bungling and vanity of the Little Theatre movement.*

• In Tragedy a chaotic universe eventually finds stability and order. In Comedy, the universe (the domestic one at any rate) seems to be in working order until chaos threatens to send all into confusion. At the start of the play, Mr. Ritter, returns from a business trip and finds his living room set up for a play rehearsal. His wife, newly cast in the play, says, about her debut as an actress: "Nelly Fell said she'd never seen even a professional actress so absolutely unconscious." Mr. Ritter moves from mild amusement to incredulity to a state of unconsciousness himself as the rehearsal progresses.

• The play is character and situation driven. It is variations on a theme; a sketch gone to the extreme. The essential conflict or debate in the play centers on the purpose of theatre in the community. Who has the right to go on display, to show off? It asks the question: what do those who can't, really do? Well, they do it and think they do it very well, thank you very much. The approach has the quality of Moliere's style in plays like *The Bourgeois Gentleman* and *The Imaginary Invalid*. As with Moliere, an obsession (in the case of *The Torch Bearers*, with the "art" of the drama) is explored in all its ridiculous vanity and, as Atkinson terms it, "incompetence." The foibles and pretensions of a particular social type are mocked, lampooned and satirized.

• In the early 1980's, sixty years after the premiere of *The Torch Bearers*, Michael Frayn used this same circular formula - the play gone wrong - and constructed his own "farce about a farce" in *Noises Off*, about a group of bumbling, very amateurish professionals, trying against all odds to make a go of a sex farce in the provinces. Shakespeare gave us the dedicated, incompetent amateurs and the overbearing Pampinelli-esque Nick Bottom, in the play within the play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* - showing the rehearsal and the performance.

• The world may be collapsing around them, but these amateurs turn the lights on brighter after every defeat and live for the curtain call. In this type of comedy, it's as if the parents are away and the children are running wild, taking over the house. The giddy times of a play like *The Torch Bearers* embrace the dreamlike quality of exaggeration and dissociation that any true comedy experience captures.

Please Remember....

Food and drink are not permitted in the theatre.

Turn off all electronic devices. Cell phones should be turned off, as the light emitted from your phone is discourteous to other guests and distracting to the performers.

Photography and video recording are not permitted.

Special Thanks

Julie Blissert, Director, Tim Nekritz, Public Affairs Office; the Music Department, Todd Graber, Chair; Syracuse Stage, Tara Wiseman; and Dan Leo.

2008|2009 Theatre Season

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The Oswego State Theatre Department presents

The Torch Bearers



written by George Kelly
directed by Mark Cole

Waterman Theatre
Tyler Hall

October 14 - 19, 2008



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