



High Button Shoes, a recent Barnstable Comedy Club production.

# Laugh a Little

Or a lot. The Cape is always good for a chuckle.

BY JOHN GREINER-FERRIS

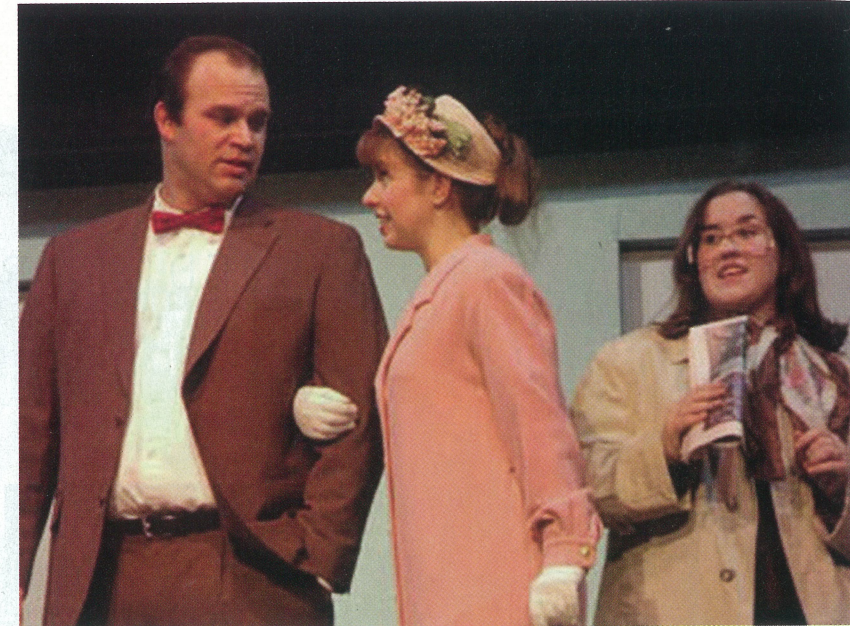
For many visitors to the Cape, crossing the bridges is synonymous with leaving the big, bad world far behind. Here is a world where sea and sand and twisted pines safeguard summer memories until it's time for them to come alive again, a world reminiscent of times when everything ended happily. It's just this kind of world that the Barnstable Comedy Club so wonderfully preserves, in the Village Hall on Route 6A.

"What the founders were thinking when they started the theater in 1922 was comedy in the classic sense, as in comedy and tragedy," explains the theater's historian, Michael Welch. "Our founders saw comedy as something that ends happily."

Those were heady times, back when the founding members formed this little theater that is now one of the longest-running community theaters in Massachusetts. It was in the middle of the Roaring 20s, the days of the Jazz

Age, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and president Warren G. Harding. Eighty-five years later, the founders' vision for the theater is still valid and just as necessary as it was back then. After all, quite a few of us could use a night out for classic comedy and happy endings.

"You won't see us do *Glengarry Glen Ross*," says Welch, referring to David Mamet's 1984 Pulitzer Prize-winning play that revolves around four despicable real estate agents. Instead, the theater's recent season included Mary Chase's *Harvey*, the adorable 1945 Pulitzer Prize-winning play about Elwood, a man whose best friend is a 6-foot 3 1/2-inch tall imaginary rabbit. When you think about it, *Harvey*, is really shades of Peter Shaffer's dark 1973 play, *Equus*, in which the disturbed character could be treated to become "normal," but would lose his passionate feelings for life as a result. That's tragedy. In *Harvey*, according to the everyman taxi driver character, doctors will make



Clockwise from top left: *Cactus Flower*, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, and *On Golden Pond*.

Elwood "...a perfectly normal human being; and you know what bastards they are!" That's comedy in the classic sense.

The theater closed last year's season with *The Hammerstone*, a well-received play about two aging college professors facing their obsolescence and ultimate demise. "I can kill you if I want," one of the professors says to a student. "I've got tenure." It's funny, in a bittersweet way, like the ending of the play, after which most of the play-goers were smiling.

If it weren't for hope and optimism, old-fashioned human qualities that they are, many of us wouldn't get out of bed in the morning. Community theaters like the Barnstable Comedy Club preserve a classic American theater heritage that fulfills a longing for "all's well that ends well." Or perhaps it's just simply the desire to face the big, bad world not so head-on, but obliquely, as comedy instead of tragedy.

The Barnstable Comedy Club's 2007-2008 season begins in November. For more information, visit [www.barnstablecomedyclub.com](http://www.barnstablecomedyclub.com)

John Greiner-Ferris is a writer and an actor.

## LIGHTEN UP

It's hot. It's summer. And the big, bad world is all the way on the other side of the bridge. Lighten up with some comedy at any of these Cape venues.

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Dennis, MA 02638  
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[www.capecodplayhouse.com](http://www.capecodplayhouse.com)

### Corpse!

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This comedy thriller is full of twists, turns, and crazy hijinks, where sibling rivalry is taken to the extreme.

### Lend Me a Tenor

By Ken Ludwig  
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Slamming doors and mistaken identities lead to nonstop laugh-out-loud comedy.

The Comedy Lounge  
The Radisson Hotel  
Route 28 (287 Iyannough Rd.)  
Hyannis  
508-771-1700  
[www.comedylounge.com/capecod](http://www.comedylounge.com/capecod)

Stand-up comedians from New York and Boston who have preformed on Comedy Central, NBC, David Letterman, HBO, Conan O'Brien, Seinfeld, and more.