

Halloween Fun in "Hainted" Toby Show

Toby is back in town starting this week with a brand new original Toby Show entitled *The House on Hainted Hill*. The show, which opens on Friday, Sept. 28, is the Rivertime Players' twelfth Toby Show in Parsons.

"It's hard to believe it's been 12 years," says Shane Bridges, known to many as "Toby" here in Parsons. "Time really flies. And it's really cool that we've gotten such tremendous support

for our little tent show. It's a very special thing."

The Toby Show regularly draws over 1000 people each year to the tent, located in the field between the Municipal Building and the car wash. Their most successful show to date was 2014's *FrankenToby*. "I hear all the time, 'this show was pretty good, but it wasn't as good as *FrankenToby*,'" laments Bridges. "People really connected to that show."

Hainted Hill reunites many of the characters from *FrankenToby* in a brand new adventure, but Bridges wants to be clear that it is not a sequel. "You don't have to have seen *FrankenToby* to understand what's going on in *Hainted Hill*. It's a brand new adventure!"

Victor Bubbastein and his creepy assistant, Eye-sore, are hosting a party in their haunted abode, located deep in the darkest reaches of Perry County. Upon their arrival, the guests come to find out that the party is actually a contest to see who can make it through the night, with a cash reward for anyone who survives. Halloween scares and starts abound, and Bridges promises plenty of surprises in this year's show. "There's a lot of things we're doing in this show that we've never done in a Toby Show before, and probably for good reason," he jokes.

Toby Shows during the heyday of Tent Theatre, in the early 20th century, would often steal popular

shows from Broadway and rewrite them, inserting the corn-fed, comedic, countrified character of Toby, who was smarter than he looked, and usually played a part in upending the bad guys' plot. *Hainted Hill* is very loosely based on the 1959 horror film, *The House on Haunted Hill*. Bridges recounts, "I was looking for ideas, and I came across this campy old Vincent Price movie. What struck me was, the narration was done by these disembodied floating heads. It occurred to me that floating heads is really the best way to indicate that this is legit Halloween entertainment."

David Taylor, Mark Tubbs, Dotty Hill and Elicia Spain reprise their roles

See Toby Show" on A2



David Taylor plays his darkest character to date as Victor Bubbastein in this year's Toby Show, *The House on Hainted Hill* starting this weekend.



The cast of this year's Toby Show entitled *The House on Hainted Hill*.

Halloween Fun in "Hainted" Toby Show

FROM PAGE A1

from *FrankenToby*. This group is as much a part of the Toby Show as Toby himself, having appeared in all 12 Parsons productions to date. Spain says, "I have been with the show from the start and was cast, as I say by default, as I was the only one to show up for auditions. I'm so glad I did. I enjoy taking the audiences to a different era and hearing their laughs each year. I am glad to be a part of such a great cast each year."

Mark Tubbs, President of the Rivertime Players, adds, "It's hard to believe that it has been twelve years since I was "volunteered" to be a part of this show and I just can't imagine life without it now. I hope the next twelve are even better."

Ivan Hobbs and Jerry Evans, veterans of several previous Toby Shows, provide lots of comic relief to the show this year, with each playing multiple roles. "These guys are such a joy," says Bridges. "I ask them to

do some ridiculous things, and believe me, this year they're doing some ridiculous things, but they never blink. They jump right in with so much enthusiasm and commitment."

"I came to my first Toby Show in 2011 when they did *Broke with the Wind*. It was hilarious, and after seeing the show I knew it was something I wanted to do. I am glad to be back in it this year," says Evans.

Posey Bridges, at only eight years old, is marking her fourth Toby Show in this year's production. "Posey is, without a doubt, the most talented, most beautiful, absolute best actress I have ever worked with," says Shane Bridges, "and I can say that unequivocally and without bias, because I'm her Dad!"

And Posey is especially excited, as her Parsons BFF Anna Kane Townsend is part of a big group of Toby first timers this year. That group includes Grace Barber, Bryce Kelley and Deanna Rosson.

"I've had Anna Kane and Grace in Kid College classes at the UTM Parsons Center for years," Bridges relates. "These two girls have always stood out to me as super enthusiastic, bright young ladies with personality bursting from their seams. Anna Kane did a

great job for us in our theatre camp this summer, and I'm thankful she was available for this show."

"Grace has been fantastic in the shows I've seen at DCMS," adds Bridges, "but her performance in Penny Lindsey's Music Man this past year was an eye opener. She is a true talent! Bryce Kelley is from Lexington, and this is only his second stage performance, but this young man simply overflows with creativity and passion. People are going to be genuinely moved by his performance."

Deanna Rosson and her six year old daughter Laine are also making their Toby debuts this year. "There is no bigger Toby fan anywhere than little Laine! I remember the first time she came to the show," Bridges recounts. "She was crying because of a boo-boo on her knee, so I snuck her a candy bar from concessions. Since that time, Laine has dragged her Mama, Deanna, to just about every performance of every Toby Show we've done! I am thrilled to have these two in the show. Deanna was a bit taken aback by our craziness at first I think, but now she's all in the crazy pool with us!"

Laine Rosson (6) and four year old Jaelyn Pierce give cameo performances

as cute little bunnies, and Gale Swift plays himself in a small role that will leave you, and maybe even him, in pieces.

There are a few scary sound effects, and some cartoon violence, but this show promises to be family friendly Halloween fare. The weather forecast is perfect for sitting in a tent. *The House on Hainted Hill* will be presented in the big tent next to the Municipal Building on Sept. 28, 29, Oct. 5, 6, 12, and 13. The tent opens at 6:30 each night, and the show starts at 7:30. Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$2 for children 12 and under. Receive a free bag of popcorn when you bring a non-perishable food donation in support of the Decatur County Shepherds Fund.

"I'm excited for everyone to see this show. It is going to be so stinking funny," says Mark Tubbs. "Of course, it doesn't hurt when you have a really brilliantly written script to work from. We have a great cast, with some new members that are getting their first taste of a Toby Show. I can't wait for them to actually perform the show in the tent."

For more information, please go to rivertimeplayers.org, or follow The Rivertime Players on Facebook.