



## conroe courier - lifestyles

### Stage Right shifts to 'Lend Me a Tenor' production

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By **Peggie Miller** Performing arts columnist

Published: 02.07.10

As most of you know, STAGE RIGHT had to replace its scheduled musical "Cole!" because of changes the director MANNY CAFFEO needed to make to accommodate the Crighton stage.

The troupe could not get permission from the publisher to modify certain elements, neither could the publisher provide necessary materials for SR to mount the show. At that point, not enough time was left to start a whole new musical production.

However, with the resourcefulness and grit that community theatres must command, Stage Right quickly worked out a solution, using most of the same cast, with Caffeo directing.

The change was to a hilarious comedy, "Lend Me a Tenor," that years earlier "brought the house down" at Conroe's Crighton Theatre, now SR's home.

It's also good news that the SR production does not conflict with the CRIGHTON PLAYERS' current comedy "Exit the Body" at the Owen Theatre. "Lend Me a Tenor" begins Feb. 19 and runs weekends through March 7 at 8 p.m., with Sunday matinees at 2 p.m. Feb. 28 and March 7. The CP show at the Owen ends with a matinee Feb. 14, after running four weekends.

Another spot of happy news is that this SR show marks the return of talented vocalist and actress GINY MENDEZ to the Crighton stage. She earned a degree and certification in music therapy several years ago, and last appeared here in "The Diary of Anne Frank."

Winner of three Tonys and four Drama Desk Awards, "Lend Me a Tenor" takes place in 1934 Cleveland where world famous tenor Tito Morelli, or El Stupendo, is to appear one night only in the operatic lead in Verdi's Otello. During mass confusion because the star arrives late, Tito receives an accidental double dose of tranquilizers that makes his pulse so slow that Sanders, general manager of the Cleveland Opera Company, and his assistant Max, presume Tito is dead.

To lose the lifetime opportunity of presenting a renowned tenor for the opera company is unthinkable; so Sanders persuades Max, an aspiring singer, to get into costume and impersonate Tito. This works well until the real tenor regains consciousness and dons a reserve costume, ready to perform. At this point two costumed Othellos vie for the stage, while two befuddled women, each thinking she is with El Stupendo, run around in lingerie.

Here I must interject information that CAROLYN WONG provided. "Because this is a last minute replacement used to 'fit' the talents already chosen for the 'Cole!' cast, it turns out to be a bit racier than the shows SR generally produces," she explained. "We'd rate it a PG 13, but patrons may be assured that we won't have women running around scantily clad. They most likely will wear slip and robe ensembles."

HAROLD WOOD, who owns a lengthy performance record with Houston's Gilbert & Sullivan Society, portrays tenor Tito. His wife, Maria, is depicted by longtime Crighton and SR favorite CATHERINE ANDERSON, recently seen in "Vaudeville" and "Love Letters."

AMY SOWERS, TOMMY HUNTER as a scene stealing bellhop longing to be a singer, and Carolyn Wong are cast members that SR fans will recognize. Giny plays Max's love interest.

Newcomers to the Crighton are Playhouse 1960 regulars WAYNE KRENNERICH as Sanders and MIKE ANDERSON as Max.

Tickets may be purchased on line at [www.stage-right.org](http://www.stage-right.org) or by calling the Crighton box office at (936) 441-7469 3 to 6 p.m. during work days.

The Crighton Players present zany farce "Exit the Body" at 2 this afternoon. It's a blithe escape into a New England house where mystery revolves around missing diamonds and bodies presumed dead that nevertheless travel to and fro in a closet. Call (936) 539-4090. It's suitable for all.

Although the deadline to purchase tickets for the Mardi Gras Ball has passed, there's a chance last minute reservations may be available if done immediately. It's at La Toretta Del Lago Saturday. Proceeds from the fundraiser go to THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY PERFORMING ARTS SOCIETY to partly fund next season's shows and for various community outreaches. To see if you can get in under the wire, call MCPAS at (936) 760-2787 first thing Monday.

Also next weekend is the 13th annual COUSHATTA CAMELLIA SOCIETY open garden tour. This may be the only time lovely gardens can be visited during the bleak winter, and it's all free. Gardens in Conroe, Huntsville and New Waverly may be viewed, with photographers welcome for bridal or family portraits or just to record memorable scenery. Tour director BILL MCCRANOR and Coushatta contact JENNY MARCOTTE say details may be found at [coushattacamelliasociety.com](http://coushattacamelliasociety.com). Free maps are at Kroger here and in Huntsville, as well as Woodforest Bank at Six Pines and Research Forest in The Woodlands.

Next week I hope you'll want to read about "Moonlighting, An Evening With..." nine skillful musicians and vocalists who live in Montgomery County. DOSEY DOE hosts a release party Saturday where attendees receive complimentary copies of the album, so put that on your calendar, and plan dinner there. More Friday.

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