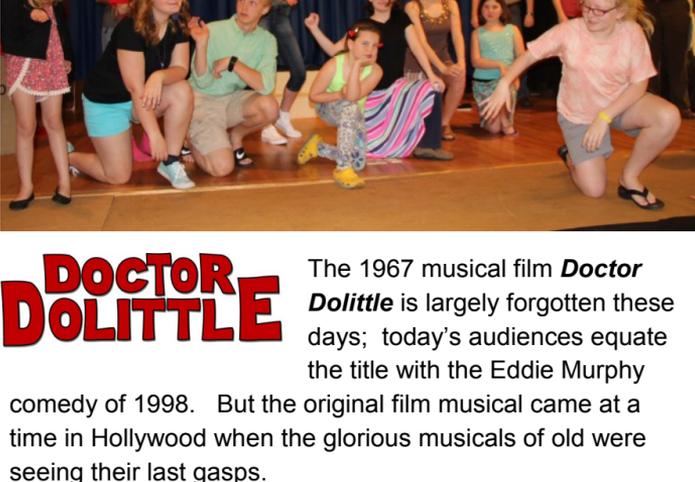


Revisiting A Musical Classic

Rec Department Candlelight Theatre Stages *DOCTOR DOLITTLE*



DOCTOR DOLITTLE

The 1967 musical film *Doctor Dolittle* is largely forgotten these days; today's audiences equate the title with the Eddie Murphy comedy of 1998. But the original film musical came at a time in Hollywood when the glorious musicals of old were seeing their last gasps.

The film capital of the world was fighting the competition of television in the late 1950s/early 1960s with the idea of "make it bigger and broader and more colorful". Movie musicals became big, expensive extravaganzas; some worked, some didn't.

The success of films like *My Fair Lady* and *The Sound of Music* (both of them Academy Award winners) led studios to believe that bigger was better. Hence, in the mid-1960s, producer Arthur Jacobs conceived of a big-budget film musical version of the Hugh Lofting series of children's books about "Doctor Dolittle". . .an English vet who has the talent for talking to animals and embarking on many adventures.

He originally tried to interest Alan J. Lerner in the project (he of *My Fair Lady* music-writing fame), but eventually signed English composer/lyricist Leslie Bricusse to write the screenplay and the music. Rex Harrison, fresh off his Academy Award-winning performance in *My Fair Lady* was signed on to play Dolittle. Harrison was not a singer and used a method of singing that was more or less rhythmic speaking.

The 20th Century Fox production went way overbudget (due primarily to the difficulties encountered with working with animals, not to mention location shooting). The production became designed as a road-show event. . .that being, a long film with an intermission that was marketed as a special event. . .thus pulling in a higher ticket price.

Therein lay the fault of the film, which opened to lackluster reviews in 1967. While the first half is engaging, using its best songs (including the Oscar winning "Talk To The Animals"), the second half gets off track. However, despite being too big and too long, it is due to the music and great performances by Harrison and his co-stars Anthony Newley and Samantha Eggar that the film is now being re-evaluated as a minor classic.

In 1998, Bricusse took the material and adapted it to the London stage, editing the story, removing some songs, adding one or two more and thus making it an enjoyable evening of musical theatre magic. He continues to revise it to this day, and it is his most recent revision that the Evergreen Park Recreation Department Candlelight Theatre will present the first weekend of June in a production that features adults and youth performers.

The basic film story remains; Doctor John Dolittle loves and talks to animals; he wants to embark on a voyage to find the Great Pink Sea Snail. A far away friend sends him a gift. . .the rare two-headed Pushmi-Pullyu. . .which allows Dolittle and his young friends to join a circus and make a small fortune which funds his voyage. He eventually finds the Great Pink Sea Snail, but realizes that the voyage has brought him much more. . .things like love and friendship, not only for him, but for his human friends as well.

A cast of about 20 people bring the story to life in the intimate stage setting of the Evergreen Park Senior Center.

Knowing that they cannot do the big musicals as produced by neighboring community theatre groups, the Rec Department Candlelight Theatre finds a niche as a "small theatre". Seating is done with small banquet tables and traditional row seating. With a desire to keep things comfortable for audiences, the seating capacity is capped at about 100 people per night.

The theatre program is now in its third year, having presented original Youth Musicals such as *Comic Strips* and *Say It With Music*, along with traditional adult plays like *The Odd Couple* and *On Golden Pond* along with several one-night only musical concerts.

The Senior Center is a multi-use facility; the main floor dining room is used by the Evergreen Park Senior Council for their monthly luncheons and the second floor auditorium is used mainly for the successful dance class program offered by the Recreation Department.

Because the floor needs to be kept bare for these classes, the theatre program itself has to be mobile; that is, all lighting and sound equipment is installed temporarily and removed quickly. A more permanent system (costing into the 5-digit figures) would ease off some of the intensive labor involved in mounting a show, and could make it a program with more frequent productions, including comedy nights and music festivals; but such is not likely to happen without any outside funding or grants.

The production of *Doctor Dolittle* itself is very expensive, and the team appreciates the help of **First National Bank of Evergreen Park, Golden Griddle Pancake House, H & R Johnson Brothers** and **Rosangela's Pizza**, who are the four businesses to date that have responded to the program's request for sponsorship assistance.

Still, the theatre program rolls on, striving to create family-friendly and family-affordable entertainment for the community, as well as providing a fun, educational activity for the young and the young-at-heart.

DOCTOR DOLITTLE plays at the Evergreen Park Senior Center on Friday, June 3 @ 7pm; Saturday, June 4 @ 8pm; and Sunday afternoon, June 5 @ 3pm. Tickets can be purchased at the Maher Community Center.

Fire Department Continues Kids Programs

Evergreen Park Fire Department Presents:
The 9th Annual CHILDREN'S HEALTH FAIR
 Wednesday, May 18th
 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
 Evergreen Park Fire House
 9000 South Kedzie Avenue
 Evergreen Park, Illinois

FREE Health Screenings, Meet Little Company of Mary Hospital Providers, Healthy, Fun Activities, and more!
 Open to kids of ALL ages, parents and families!
This is a FREE event!

EVERGREEN PARK FIRE DEPT. **LITTLE COMPANY OF MARY HOSPITAL AND HEALTH CARE CENTERS**
 The Technology to Heal, the Mission to Care

"Brunch Is Served" to Pre-School Classes and Moms

Moms of the Evergreen Park Recreation Department Preschool kids were treated to a series of Mothers Day brunches last week at the Community Center. Split out over three "sittings", the continental breakfast feast was served to almost two hundred people. A montage of pictures will soon be available for viewing at www.evergreenpark-ill.com.



SAVE THE DATE for "Movies In The Park"

From baseball ("The Sandlot") to magic genies ("Aladdin") to the greatest plot twist of all time ("The Empire Strikes Back"), the movie screen in Circle Park will be home to three audience favorites over the summer.

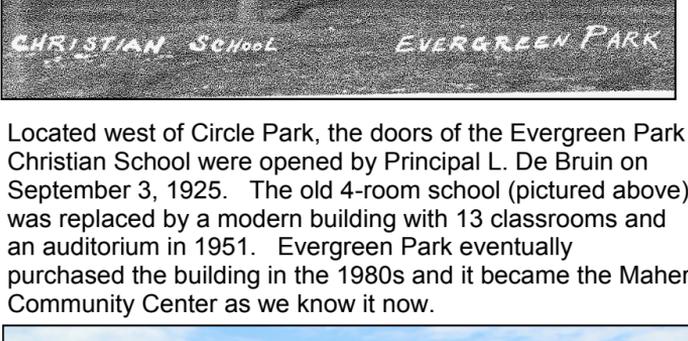
"The Sandlot" runs on Friday night, June 24 at 9pm and is co-sponsored by the EP Stallions, who will be selling concessions at the event. Weather permitting, we expect a huge crowd!

Friday, June 24 9:00pm	Friday, July 22 8:30pm	Friday August 26 8:15pm

All Movie Nights Held At Circle Park
 97th and Homan Ave
 Bring Your Own Picnic!
 Movie nights subject to cancellation if weather is inclement

SCRAPBOOK OF MEMORIES

The Evergreen Park Christian School



Located west of Circle Park, the doors of the Evergreen Park Christian School were opened by Principal L. De Bruin on September 3, 1925. The old 4-room school (pictured above) was replaced by a modern building with 13 classrooms and an auditorium in 1951. Evergreen Park eventually purchased the building in the 1980s and it became the Maher Community Center as we know it now.



THE VILLAGE GREEN

is a supplement to our free weekly informational electronic newsletter which is delivered to the email inbox of subscribers. To subscribe, simply email us a epinf@hotmail.com

The eblast and this supplement are available on our website, www.evergreenpark-ill.com