

Rivertime Players end 2011 season

Local Tent Show Troupe faces bright future



Cast members of The Rivertime Players' performance of *Broke With the Wind* gather onstage for the last curtain call of the 2011 season. From left are Hunter Jordan (Chris), Mark Tubbs (Ashley Wilkes), Dotty Hill (Scarlett O'Hara), Shane Bridges (Toby T. Taylor), David Taylor (Rhett Butler), Elicia Jo Spain (Ida Claire Wilkes), Jenni Turner (Prunella Purple Butler), and Brett Jordan (Franklin O'Hara). Not shown are George Pettigrew (Poke Salat) and Patricia Stanford (Cousin B-Flat, the pianist). The show enjoyed a four-performance run to packed houses.

The lot next door to the Parsons Municipal Building was frozen in the golden age of tent shows for the last time this year on Saturday night, October 8, as the Rivertime Players gave their final performance of *Broke With the Wind*, ending the 2011 Parsons Peavine Heritage Festival.

The troupe ended their four-performance season on a high note as they held their audience captive with their engaging slapstick onstage antics. The play, the main event of the evening, was preceded with a sing-along session and ended with a rapid series of vaudeville acts.

Parsons is fortunate, not only to be the home of one of the country's last authentic traveling tent shows, but also to serve as the incubator city for the fertile talents of the Rivertime Players, a rapidly growing company of enthusiastic, committed artists who are willing to

entertain, promote and provide concessions for their audience. Led by director Shane Bridges, the cast performed *Broke With the Wind* for over 500 people and hawked 300 bags of Rivertime Players Popcorn and 300 boxes of Rivertime Players Fancy Taffy, many of which contained prizes, one of which contained a genuine imitation ruby ring. But best of all, they channeled a few hours of another, simpler time enabling the audience to become participants, themselves, of that fragile experience.

The Rivertime Players have a vibrant youth program (as evidenced by the wonderful performances of Jenni Turner as Rhett's daughter Prunella Purple Butler, Brett Jordan who played Franklin O'Hara and Hunter Jordan, who portrayed Chris, aka Chrissy) and produces an annual spring kids show as well as the Peavine per-

formances. The News Leader will give notice for audition dates as soon as it becomes available.

"I am continually amazed, overwhelmed, and thankful for the support this community gives our show," said Bridges, who recently moved to Parsons from Nashville. Indeed, the little tent show of the past is enjoying newfound popularity with people of all ages, and there is potential for a dinner theater project after the kids show. The group recently acquired their 501(c)(3) status, which makes them eligible for grants to support their work, and makes donations to their cause tax-exempt. "Over 20 percent of the population came out to support us, and by all accounts, they had a great time! Some came back two or three times! I couldn't be more thankful," said Bridges. Mark Tubbs, a long-time cast mem-

ber who is also the President of the Board of Directors for the Rivertime Players added, "I'm extremely pleased with the outcome of the show and with the support of the community, and I urge people to tell everyone about the show. I think personal insights from our audience is a great way to promote the show in our community and beyond."

Order forms to purchase DVD copies of *Broke With the Wind* are available at the Parsons Municipal Building or online at the Rivertime Players website at rivertimeplayers.org.

Bridges ended the interview with a grin. "If you came and saw the show, and know someone who didn't, tell 'em about it! They can buy their own DVD of the show for only \$20! If you came and saw the show, and didn't like it, well... keep your big mouth shut!"