

**For August 19, 2009**

**By Doc Heide**

AFT has been blessed to have many fine music directors over the years. But this summer we have a guy whose qualifications are literally world-class.

He's Colin Welford, who's spent the last four years as music director for "Wicked" in Chicago. Impressive as that sounds, it's only the beginning of his amazing credits.

For example, Colin served as music supervisor for "The Lion King" on Broadway and for 11 other productions worldwide. He performed the same role for "The Who's Tommy" in Europe.

### **Busy Brit**

On top of that, he spent four years conducting the English National Ballet. He music directed the original production of "The Fix" in London, directed by Sam Mendes ("American Beauty"). He's been professor of orchestration at the University of Florida, worked with the New York Pops, and orchestrated several award-winning albums that have gone platinum.

And his education? A couple of minor British schools: Oxford University and the Royal College of Music.

As if this weren't enough, he's a charmer with a heart of gold.

When we did the Fourth of July parades, he dressed up like an Indian and raced through the crowd handing out flyers. Afterwards, he stuck around after all the actors had left to take apart the float.

We can only afford to pay him a fraction of what he normally earns. Yet he volunteered to transcribe the score for our fall show "Guys & Does" on his own dime, and generated a document of 100+ pages with painstaking detail.

In his spare time, he's also helped us purchase and program a state-of-the-art computer system to augment our sound in the park. And he gave us all free voice lessons, focused on our musical solos. We deeply appreciate all of this.

### **Manic for Music**

Originally from Manchester, England, Colin began orchestrating at Oxford while studying musicology. When I asked him what it was like directing the English National Ballet, he described a mix of enjoyment and disappointment.

On the one hand, he loved leading this grand orchestra in places like Royal Albert Hall. On the other, excitement could be hard to conjure from the venerable troupe. And Colin lives for the thrill of creating crackling music.

When we actors show up for sound check at night in the park, we're often a bit low-key after eating dinner. Colin instantly raises our spirits with his beaming smile and unflagging good mood.

He urges us to "tickle the ears of our patrons." He warns us away from "lumpen" phrasing or ending notes with "nefarious cutoffs". "Use the strength in the words", he exhorts us.

Colin "gets" AFT's mixture of professionalism and folksiness. He works within it to assure that our sound sparkles.

"Have fun with this," he tells the cast. "But of course I'm preaching to the choir---literally."

See you under the stars.

AFT performs at the Peninsula State Park Theatre Monday-Saturday through August 29. The world premiere ***Cheeseheads, the Musical*** plays Monday at 8 pm, Wednesday at 6 pm, Thursday at 8 pm and Saturday at 8:30pm. ***Sunsets & S'mores***, a centennial celebration of Peninsula State Park, plays 8 pm on Tuesday and 6 pm on Saturday. ***Muskie Love*** returns on

Wednesday at 8:30pm and Friday at 8 pm. Advanced and reserved tickets are available at [www.folkloretheatre.com](http://www.folkloretheatre.com), at 854-6117, at the AFT office in the Green Gables Shops in North Ephraim, or at the box office at the theatre one hour prior to performance. A park sticker is not required in the theatre lot for the show.

Doc Heide is co-founder, playwright, and performer with American Folklore Theatre.