

Want To Know What It Is To Be An Actor?

By Karen King Russo

Can you believe this? Right here in Manhattan Beach we have an accomplished actor/director, Tony Torrisi, who is giving a series of acting classes to would-be thespians. Some members of the class actually have years of community experience. Others, nada--not a minute, complete novices. That's me. I had one semester of high school drama and revealed no talent then. But at this stage in life, what the heck? It can be fun to throw your hat in the ring and try something new, with no expectations, no requirement to excel. And it's close to home.

Tony doesn't promise everyone a career on the stage. But if we just participate, he does promise that we will learn to listen, observe, and know ourselves better. "Acting," he quips, "has saved me thousands of dollars on psychotherapy."

It is Darryl Potik, a retired assistant high school principal, who had acted under Tony Torrisi's direction of the PV Players and the Norris Theatre, who brought him to Manhattan Beach. Potik has also been an active participant in the Play Reading Group, sponsored by Manhattan Beach's Older Adult Program and facilitated by KC Johnson and Maria Ruiz. There we read monologues, or scenes from plays in groups of two or three. Many in the play reading group have joined the acting class, including yours truly.

Torrisi was born in Boston but began his acting career in New York where he was directed by Joseph Papp, performed in *Shakespeare in the Park*, and then became a member of Actor's Studio, studying with Peggy Feury and Lee Strassberg. He followed Strassberg to Los Angeles to be in his Actors Studio there. From theatre to television, from Shakespeare to *Police Woman*, *Night Stalker* and *Room 222*, his career has spanned a wide spectrum. Early in the cable game, he produced and hosted his own show, the Ace nominated *Dialogue*. In that show, he interviewed prominent members of the film and television industry.

In the late '80s he switched to directing and has directed over 50 shows, collecting six

Best Director awards. More recently, Tony has served as Artistic Director of ART in Palos Verdes for four years, and PV Players for 12 years, as well as teaching and directing for the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in Hollywood. Notable shows include *And Then There was Nun*, 2000, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, 2001, *Crimes of the Heart*, 2002, or *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, 2003.

In the acting class, he gives us short exercises which left me paralyzed in the beginning, but I am beginning to feel more comfortable--a little. He has asked us to participate in a conversation without asking a question; to give a one-minute perception of another person in the class; to face a person for a minute, then turn your back while changes are made to their appearance, and then to turn back again to see if you can name the changes. And there is lots of improvisation. We have had to read three non-related words and make a story using them, and have a spontaneous argument with another member of the class based on one given line. All are ways to observe, or loosen up, and take on the emotions of another person--that is, to be someone else other than who we are.

Several years ago and after my knees stopped knocking, I took to Toastmasters with gusto. I could write a speech or an introduction, practice it and give it. But this thinking off the wall, on your feet, is another thing. Not easy for me. But we are a friendly, supportive, non-judgmental group. Everyone roots for everyone else. Tony makes it fun. So come give it a try. We'll root for you too.

Classes are held at the Manhattan Heights Community Center, Tuesdays, 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., except for the first Tuesday of the month when much of the group is at Play Reading at Joslyn Community Center. The fee is \$75 a month, based on three classes at \$25 per class. But Tony is flexible. If you know ahead that you will miss a class, you don't have to pay for it. For more information, call Darryl Potik at 310-542-5663 or Tony Torrisi himself at 310-258-9412.

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Calendar

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2009

• Fall Craft Fair at the Roundhouse Aquarium 10:00 AM to Sunset Saturday and Sunday the 18th. Children will have the opportunity to engage in numerous crafts including decorating cookies and making masks. This is an annual event that dovetails with the animal exhibits always available at the aquarium. The Roundhouse Aquarium is located at the end of the Manhattan Beach pier. www.roundhouseaquarium.org

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2009

• Manhattan Beach Farmers Market offers fresh, locally grown, fruits, vegetables, flowers, artisan foods, etc. On 13th Street between Morningside and Valley Drive 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM. Sponsored by the Downtown Manhattan Beach Business Association 310-379-9901.

• Zsuzsanna at Manhattan Beach Library Community Room. Acoustic folk/rock singer Zsuzsanna (Zsa Zsa) who's been compared to Bonnie Raitt and Joss Stone, she will perform 7 to 8:30 pm at the Library, 1320 Highland Avenue (310) 545-8596.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2009

• Movie - Paper Moon. Traveling across the heartland of depression-era America, a father-daughter relationship becomes a business partnership to survive. Tatum O'Neal won a well-deserved Oscar (the youngest actor in history) for her performance as the "precocious" daughter - an adult in a child's body. A nostalgic look at the 1930s may resonate with some contemporary realities. Beginning at 1:30 p.m. and followed by discussion. Joslyn Center, 1601 Valley Dr., Manhattan Beach. Free event 310-372-9505.

• Volunteer training at the Roundhouse Aquarium October 21 and October 22. You must attend both trainings 4PM-6PM. Potential volunteers will receive four hours of training related to the animals in the aquarium and the duties and responsibilities of volunteers. Please contact Lauren Holman at 310-379-8117 or visit www.roundhouse-aquarium.org

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2009

• Manhattan Beach Coordinating Council luncheon, 12:00 PM (registration 11:30 AM). Verandas (401 Rosecrans Avenue, MB). The cost is \$27 for members and \$35 for non-members. RSVP required by Monday October 19th (for reservations, please email reservations@mbCoordinatingCouncil.com). Bazzel Baz (CEO & Founder, Association for the Recovery of Children) will be the featured speaker. The mission of the Manhattan Beach Coordinating Council is to encourage coordination of events and communication among city agencies, organizations and individuals interested in making our community a better place to live. The Coordinating Council also recognizes Manhattan Beach Students of the Month

and awards scholarships to outstanding Mira Costa High School seniors. For membership information and an application, please email to Info@mbCoordinatingCouncil.com.

UPCOMING

• Community Events benefiting Manhattan Beach, Redondo Beach, Hermosa Beach and El Segundo Educational Foundations. Pier-to-Pier Friendship Walk "Go the Extra Mile for Our Children" Sunday, October 25, 10:00am-11:30am at Manhattan Beach Pier. Join us for an afternoon of family fun and community solidarity as we walk hand-in-hand to benefit local school districts, and an organization that brings joy, cheer and respite to children with special needs and their families. The walk will occur on the strand, registration begins at 8:30am. Friendship Walk 10:00a.m -11:30a.m. After the walk all walkers will be invited to take place in the Pumpkin Races on Manhattan Beach Blvd. directly above the pier at 12:00pm "Join us in the Race to Keep Our Public Schools Strong" The festivities will also feature a Kids Zone with bounce houses, games and booths. Manhattan Beach Educational Foundation 310-303-3342 www.pier2pierwalk.com www.pumpkinrace.com

• Excellence in Healthcare Gala. South Bay Family Health Care (SBFHC) Fourth Annual "Excellence in Healthcare" Gala and 40th anniversary celebration Thursday, October 29, 6 pm at the Manhattan Beach Marriott. Honoring Visionary of the Year, Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and Leadership Award recipients Trish Anderson, Joe Graziano, and Ian Kramer, M.D.! All funds raised will be put toward SBFHC (formerly South Bay Free Clinic). Tickets \$150, table sponsorships are available for \$1,500. For more information call West Enterprises 310-227-8100 or lwest@westenterprises.info ...

ONGOING

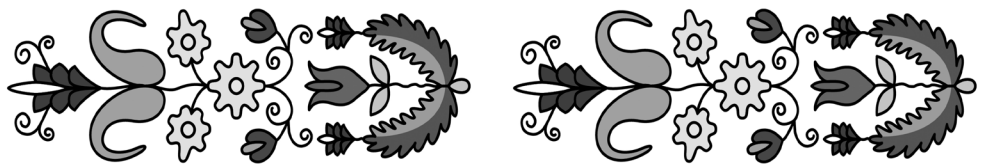
• A beginner class in Scottish Country Dancing is starting in Manhattan Beach on Tuesday evenings at 7:00 pm. The class meets at the Knights of Columbus Hall 224 1/2 S. Sepulveda Blvd., Manhattan Beach. The first two lessons are free. For further information contact Willma 310-546-2005.


• MOMS Club of Manhattan Beach. Meet local at-home mothers for friendship, fun playgroups, support and more! For membership info and meeting dates/locations call Michelle at (310) 489-3927 or momsclub90266@hotmail.com

• Older Adults discussion group. Come discuss current events, movies, topics of local and national interest, whatever is on your mind.

The discussion group meets every Monday from 9:00 a.m. - noon at the Joslyn Community Center, 1601 Valley Drive. For more information please call The Older Adults Program (310) 802-5447. •

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 <h1 style="margin: 0;">DEADLINES</h1>
<p>OBITUARIES: Monday at noon.</p> <p>CALENDAR ITEMS: Prior Friday at noon.</p> <p>PEOPLE ITEMS: Prior Friday at noon.</p> <p>DISPLAY AD CHANGES: Prior Thursday at noon.</p> <p>CLASSIFIEDS: Tuesday at noon.</p> <p>LEGAL NOTICES: Monday at noon.</p> <p>NEW DISPLAY ADS: Prior Thursday at noon.</p> <p>REAL ESTATE ADS: Monday at noon.</p> <p>AD CANCELLATIONS: Prior Thursday.</p> <p>LATE CANCELLATIONS WILL BE CHARGED 50% OF AD</p>