

# PRIME TIMES

A resource book for 55+

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## All the World's a Stage

*Theater Troupe Puts on a Show....*



**INSIDE:** **Stepping Lightly:** Folkdancers make their rounds

**Bringing Ithaca to Silent Film:** Miller White wrote about the place she loved



# Acting in Concert

By Bill Swan

Ithaca is well known in the area for local and regional talent. Often this talent is associated with the local colleges and younger age groups. Among this talent though, is a group of senior citizens whose love of theater has not been diminished by age: the Senior Theater Troupe of Tompkins County. This group of ten women is led by Sue Perlmut and practices telling stories based upon real-life experiences using an improv style. Perlmut, a graduate of NYU with an MA in Educational Theater, says her experience covers 30 years of teaching and performing.

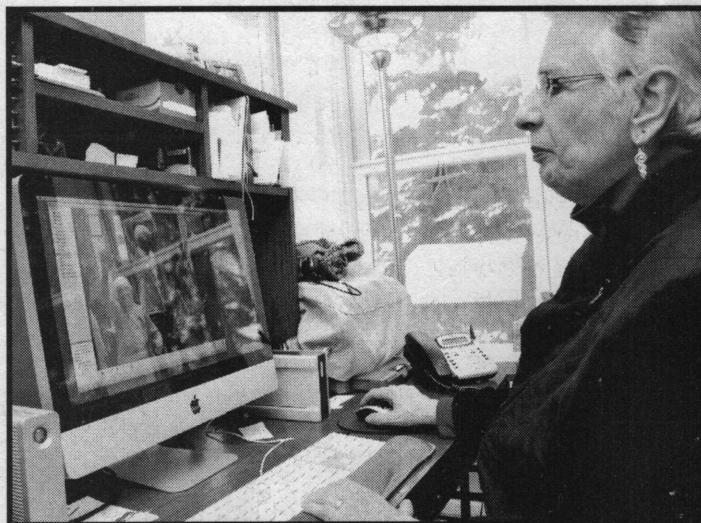
Many of the current members of the group have been with the troupe since its beginning in 2002. The troupe itself was formed out of theater workshops Perlmut teaches at the Lifelong Center in Ithaca. The Center is located at 119 Court Street, Ithaca and strives to improve and enrich the lives of senior citizens residing in Tompkins County. The Lifelong Center is funded through both memberships and the United Way.

In a method similar to Garrison Keillor who tells stories of the fictional

town of Lake Wobegon based upon his experiences, the group uses neither props nor sets, although Maggie Goldsmith, a member of the group, admits they do work with scripts and memorize no lines. The group does hold rehearsals weekly, but there is always a sense of spontaneity with each performance.

According to Natasha Tall one of the original, and still active, members, "the collaboration between us is amazing." Ideas come from experiences each member has had in life, then are worked on by the entire group until they become a form of "choral theater." Past themes have included travel, items of clothing, childhood memories, animals, all four seasons, neighbors and family members. Each performance is accommodates the physical stamina and ability of individual members.

The theater group has performed for groups of various sizes in many different venues. Mainly the group performs at senior centers and residences, schools and local workshops, emphasizing the range of possibility within theater.



Sue Perlmut leads the Senior Theater Troupe at Lifelong.

The group has traveled but according to Tall they recently decided to stay within the community.

The overall experience of the group can be found in members such as Tall who has a similar background to Perlmut and still helps local college theater students with various projects. Tall is also from NYC. On the other end of the spectrum is Goldsmith, native to the area, who has been with the group for three years. The ages of the group bring even more diversity into the mix, ranging from 60 to 90 years young. Both Tall and Goldsmith agree that the camaraderie, humor and intelligence of the group keeps them participating in this venture. When asked for a favorite memory of the group, Tall summed it up: "I have so many I can't

even tell you just one."

Group members also migrated to the theater in a variety of ways. Perlmut started the group as a volunteer effort. Tall decided to take a class in improv and "got hooked." Goldsmith met up with Perlmut at a party and decided to join after talking.

The theater group is open to senior citizens regardless of their experience in acting or storytelling. To take one of the improv workshops, or to contact the theater troupe, contact Sue Perlmut at 272-3224. For more information concerning the Senior Theater Troupe you can also visit their web page on Perlmut's site at <http://www.closetohomeproductions.com/seniortheatretroupe.html>