

## Broadway on stage in Jamestown Nov. 15-16

By Eileen M. Daly

Broadway is coming to Jamestown and, not surprisingly, the longtime director of the Jamestown Community Theater, Mary Schachtel Wright is behind it. Never one to squander an opportunity, Wright struck up a friendship with Broadway actor/singer/dancer Jon Peterson after seeing him perform in "Half a Sixpence" at Goodspeed Theater in Connecticut this past summer. "He was fabulous," Wright said. "I spoke with him after the performance and we've kept in touch through e-mails. When I realized we were not going to have enough actors for the play we were planning for this fall, I approached Jon about the possibility of his performing here."

Peterson, a native of London, England, confirms Wright's account of their meeting. "I was on my way to a press conference after performing in 'Half a Sixpence' when Mary swerved into my path. She told me that she had seen the show and thought it was fabulous. We talked for a while and really hit it off," Peterson said. "When she approached me about doing a show in Jamestown, I had to say yes. Really, I am doing it for Mary because I just love her so much," Peterson said.

Originally, Wright and Peterson had planned to stage a performance of the play, "George M. Cohan Tonight," that Peterson had been a part of in New York. "It was a very successful show here and we thought about putting it on in Jamestown, but when I sent the script over to Mary she wasn't thrilled with it. Instead she suggested that I think about doing my own show. I agreed to think about it," Peterson said.

And think about he did, coming up with the idea while performing another show. "I was



Jon Peterson

right in the middle of a performance of 'Half a Sixpence' when it came to me. Why not do a show about some of the great song and dance men? The guys who were a complete package, who wrote and sang and danced, people like Sammy Davis Jr. and Fred Astaire. So, that's what we decided to do," Peterson said.

The show was written by Peterson and is called "Song Man, Dance Man." "I am grateful to Mary for asking me to perform in Jamestown because it gave me the impetus to complete the writing for this show," Peterson said. The show is a tribute to a number of great song and dance men including George M. Cohan, Sammy Davis Jr., Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly, Anthony Newley and Charles Aznavour. "It is a tribute and not an imitation," Peterson said. "I am not trying to impersonate anyone, but rather I am telling a story and paying tribute to them."

A number of talented young actors from Jamestown will be joining Peterson in performing "Song Man, Dance Man."

Last Monday, Rachel Warner, 11, Jan Trousilek, 12, Alex

Trousilek, 9, Allie Brown, 15, Caleb Brown, 12, Dana Larkin, 12, Julia Hirsch, 11, Madeleine Hirsch, 9, Abigail Hirsch, 7, Damien Beecroft, 9 and Sydney Pazera, 12, were hard at work rehearsing for their part in the performance. Accompanied by pianist Walter Sage and with the help of music director Patty Vandal and Wright they were learning lyrics, marking stage directions and preparing for the debut performance.

Since Peterson will not be arriving until Nov. 11, the children have been rehearsing without him. Damien Beecroft, 9, sang Peterson's role on Monday and did so with gusto and panache. Peterson's response when he heard that Beecroft was doing such a great job filling in for him was characteristically good-natured. "Well, I guess I'd better make sure I brush up on my part then," Peterson said.

Wright, who has spent much of her life encouraging children to find their talents and to shine, was in character on Monday. At the end of the rehearsal she told the children, "You've done a wonderful job and I want you to know that each of you has a very special gift. Congratulations to you for using that gift here tonight," she said.

"Song Man, Dance Man" will be performed at the Jamestown Recreation Center, 41 Conanicus Ave. on Saturday, Nov. 15, at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Nov. 16, at 4 p.m. Tickets are available in Jamestown at Baker's Pharmacy and Conanicut Marine, in Newport at Pleasant Surprise and in Wickford at Midnight Sun. Regular admission tickets are \$12 in advance and \$15 at the door. Senior and children's tickets are \$7 in advance and \$10 at the door. For more information, call 423-2121.



### Spooky night

These trick-or-treaters tried to be convincingly scary on Halloween. Clockwise from top are Helen Van Cleef, Maggie Kelly, Myra Lendrum, Danielle Croft and Emily van Gelder.

Photo by Adrienne Downing

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