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# Burlington County Times

## Theater

### Patrick Cassidy at Bucks Playhouse to receive honor on behalf of his mother, Shirley Jones

- By Liz Johnson, Correspondent



Courtesy Bucks County Playhouse

Shirley Jones with Gordon McRae in the 1955 film version of Rodgers & Hammerstein's "Oklahoma!"

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Just out of high school, actress Shirley Jones was on her way to veterinary school when, on a lark while visiting a friend in New York City, she dropped in on a casting call for "South Pacific."

When she finished singing the obligatory 16 bars, the casting director asked if she'd wait while he ran across the street. He returned with composer Richard Rodgers in tow. He asked her to perform it again.

Afterward, Rodgers told her, "I need to call my partner so he can hear you sing," recounted Patrick Cassidy, Jones' son. "She said 'Who's your partner?' He said, 'Oscar Hammerstein.' She had no idea. She was that naïve."

Jones was hired as part of the ensemble and eventually was put under contract by Rodgers and Hammerstein to perform in their musicals.

For being one of Hammerstein's beloved stars, Jones will be named to the Bucks County Playhouse's Hall of Fame during its annual Hammerstein Festival, a weekend-intensive that offers theater-lovers a glimpse of what goes into writing and producing a musical. It runs this Saturday and Sunday.



Cassidy, who has his own varied past, performing musicals in theaters across the country, will receive the award on her behalf as well as perform in the Hammerstein Hollywood Benefit Concert on Saturday night as part of a lineup that includes Andrea McArdle, Ashley Brown, Max Von Essen, Malcolm Gets and Carmen Cusack. The concert is open to the public.

Jones went on to star in the movie adaptation of "Oklahoma!" filmed in 1955. That same year, her future husband Jack Cassidy was performing at the New Hope playhouse, said his son.

"My father played there a lot," said Cassidy. While courting over the summer of 1955, both Jones and Cassidy spent time in New Hope, while the elder Cassidy performed a series of repertoire shows.

The two married the next year and had three sons — teen idol Shaun, Patrick and Ryan. Jones would go on to play Shirley Partridge in the hit 1970s television series "The Partridge Family," starring alongside David Cassidy, her stepson. Jack Cassidy honed villain roles, appearing in television shows such as "Columbo" and "McCloud" and in movies, including 1975's "The Eiger Sanction," opposite Clint Eastwood.

Patrick said he decided early on that he didn't want to be a teen idol. In high school, as a star football player, he had plans to join the NFL. Sidelined by an injury, he turned to theater, trying out for his high school musical "The Music Man."

Despite being coached by Dick Van Dyke, a friend of his mother's, Cassidy was selected to play a salesman rather than the lead. Still, he said, "it got me hooked with the theater bug."

"I've done an immense amount of television, but musical theater has been my staple," he said.

After his Bucks County appearance, he'll head to The Algonquin Theater in Maine to perform in "Mamma Mia!"

"I'm excited about coming and representing my mom," who is recovering from a fracture and can't travel, he said.

Equally exciting was rooting for his youngest son, Jack, a contestant on this season's "The Voice," he said. Unfortunately, young Jack didn't make the cut and was eliminated for Team Alicia (Keys).

"My mother says he's the best singer in our family," said Cassidy, adding that he's just as proud of his eldest son Cole who is studying to be a mechanical engineer.

"All I can say is watch," he said.