



Meet the Cast of *Stalag 17*

Over the past few weeks the cast has been in non-stop rehearsal mode preparing for TACT's production. Tom Eisman, Jay Hardee, Steve Lebens, David Olmstead, John Stange, and Gabriel Swee took a few seconds to provide our TACT audience with a bit of information about themselves. Here are a few tidbits about the lives of some of our stars!

What made you audition for *Stalag 17*?

- **Tom Eisman (TE):** After spending a year in Chicago, I wanted to get back into the DC theatre scene. I've known about TACT and have been impressed with previous shows, so what better way to jump back in?
- **Jay Hardee (JH):** I work frequently at Washington Shakespeare Company, which I'm grateful for, but I like to work with other companies from time to time. When I saw that Bill Aiken, who I've worked with before, was directing it seemed like the perfect time to see what the good folks at TACT are all about.
- **Steve Lebens (SL):** I love ensemble pieces like *Stalag 17*.
- **David Olmstead (DO):** Ironically, I was originally hired to stage manage the show, but I was assisting in auditions and did something to catch Bill's eye. After the audition he told me I had acted my way out of my stage managing job!
- **John Stange (JS):** With a cast of 15 – 20 men, I was sure this would provide some hilariously unprintable banter during rehearsal breaks. I was not wrong.
- **Gabriel Swee (GS):** This was the first opportunity that presented itself after my recent move to the DC area to pursue a career as an actor. I am very grateful to be a part of this production.

What is the most challenging or rewarding part of the role you are playing?

- **TE: Herb's** a bit of a dork and I don't think of myself as "army material", so getting in that mindset is a challenge. Big as he is, he's kind of the barracks runt. He's young, but also smarter than he looks.
- **JH:** I think my challenge will be making **Marko** a multi-dimensional character with his own arc, rather than just being there to advance the narrative with exposition and information from outside the walls of the set. I feel he makes an impact when he enters and provides some comic relief, which will be fun to play.
- **SL:** The challenge about playing **Reed** is pulling off celebrity impressions, which I haven't done since high school.
- **DO:** I play **Horney**. It's going to be a challenge because I never leave the stage, yet I also don't speak! While I'm enjoying playing a catatonic character, staying focused is going to be challenging.
- **JS: Stosh** has a big personality, but also a big mouth. It's easy to play someone like that as pure comic ham. If I do my job right, I hope people will see a guy's who has gone stir crazy while trying to stay sane under these terrible circumstances. The goal is to also be damn funny while doing this.
- **GS:** The most rewarding aspect of playing **Duke** is being able to explore play without worrying about the hindrance of a great many lines.

So we all know the monumental blizzard just happened...what was the best part of blizzard 2010?

- **TE:** The epic snowball fight in DuPont Circle, but sadly I was stuck in Springfield and could not attend.
- **JH:** The sledding in my neighborhood was pretty stellar. Plus, I always enjoy a reason to stay at home cooking and eating all day long.

- **SL:** Having time off to learn my lines before first rehearsal.
- **DO:** Unfortunately I had broken my foot right before the blizzard (during *Rock Hunter*), so I was stuck at home unable to leave.
- **JS:** A solid week of zero productivity is something you relish. You gotta “romance” free time like that. Yet, I did find time to discover an excellent liquor store.
- **GS:** Watching the snow fall with a beer in one hand and a good cigar in the other.

What was the first play you were in, and what role did you portray?

- **TE:** Ensemble, *Damn Yankees* – Freshman in High School.
- **JH:** Michael Darling, *Peter Pan* – Freshman in High School (first professional show was *Everyman* with Journeymen Theater Ensemble where I played Fellowship and Five-Wits).
- **SL:** One of the Dwarves, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, in our backyard as a kid.
- **DO:** First play - honestly can't remember. (First TACT play, *The Titans*.)
- **JS:** Smirnov, Chekhov's *the Bear* – Russian class in College (this was pure accident, prior to this I was scared to give oral book reports in front of my classmates).
- **GS:** Judge Hawthorne, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* – Senior in High School.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

- **TE:** I love to sing, play my guitar, and watch standup comedy/improv. I'm also a tour guide in the DC-Metro area.
- **JH:** I travel...a lot! Recently, my partner and I spent 2 weeks in Dubai where we camped out in a Bedouin village on New Year's Eve. This fall I'm traveling to Tobago and Suriname (which will serve as my partner's and my honeymoon) and it just might top our best trip so far, the Beijing Olympics..
- **SL:** By day I play a Foreign Service officer with the Department of State.
- **DO:** I enjoy spending time with friends and I have to admit – I'm a huge Simpsons fan. That can absorb a ridiculous amount of spare time!
- **JS:** Like most actors, I have a computer science degree and work days as a UNIX programmer and systems administrator.
- **GS:** What little free time I have is enjoyed at the movies, reading, or playing my guitar.

Age-old debate: The Beatles or The Rolling Stones?

Now this was a big debate and one that unfortunately our cast can't solve. J. Hardee and J. Stange are Stones fans, while G. Swee is a “hands down” Beatles fan. S. Lebens wants to pass them both over for Benny Goodman and T. Eisman thinks the debate should be between The Who and the Beatles, and thinks the Stones would win for “which you would rather disappear from the earth.” I think we need to crank it up to J. Stange's comment, “This is more of a Stones kind of show.”

So the Stones win for the show, but the age-old debate will continue to rock the minds of our cast.

Be sure to come back and see what our crew members think about this debate in our next issue!