



**dailybreeze.com**  
LAX TO L.A. HARBOR

SEARCH  
This Site • Web Search powered by **YAHOO!**

Subscriber Services | Home Delivery | e-Edition  
Login | Newsletter | Alerts | RSS

Part of the LA.com Network

Home News Sports Business Opinions Entertainment Life & Culture Info Classifieds Jobs Autos Homes Obits Directories

Place an Ad

**Ask About this Story**  
Have a question about something in this story? Ask it here and get answers from readers like you.

BOOKMARK Print Email Font Resize

## 'Producers' gets special touch from aerospace workers

By Amy Schellenbaum Staff Writer  
Posted: 07/15/2010 05:52:54 PM PDT

It takes a lot to put on a show. There are lines to be memorized and choreography to be learned. There are props, sets and costumes to make. There are sound and lighting design and weeks of rehearsals.

And, of course, in between those tasks there are space systems to design, satellites to navigate, space simulations to create and data to process and evaluate.

Wait. What?

In almost superheroic style, aerospace employees go from mild-mannered engineers and scientists to costume designers and show-tune soloists as members of The Aerospace Players, which opens its annual summer show, "The Producers," July 23 at the James Armstrong Theatre in Torrance.

"There's a big social culture. I just enjoy performing and interacting with these people," said producer and Aerospace Players president Bob Borich.

The Aerospace Players is composed of about 50 local aerospace employees, Air Force personnel and family members interested in finding an outlet for creativity and an excuse for social gatherings.

"Engineering design ... takes a special combination of creativity and teamwork," said Robert Minnichelli, one of the leads in the musical, as well as principal director of the Architecture and Design Subdivision at The Aerospace Corp. "It is not too surprising to me that so many aerospace engineers enjoy participating in ... theatrical production."

"The Producers," with music and lyrics by Mel Brooks, is a comedy that follows the

antics of failed musical producer Max Bialystock (Minnichelli) and an accountant, Leo Bloom (Joe Essner of Raytheon Co.), who scheme to co-produce a deliberate box-office failure, with the intent of escaping to Brazil with money raised by swindling elderly sponsors.

Their quest to produce the worst show ever, a musical called "Springtime for Hitler," introduces a cast of eccentric characters whose lives are weaved together with colorful absurdity.

The musical parody is typical of Brooks, who wrote such comedies as "Blazing Saddles," "Young Frankenstein" and the "Get Smart" television series.

Director Steve Norris, an employee at Plasma Technology Inc. and a big fan of the writer, said he intended to incorporate into the production

essential elements of Brooks' humor. With that in mind, he "The board agreed to take on something newer ... and to take us out of our comfort zone," said Borich. "We're really taking some risks with this show."

inserted iconic scenes and lines from other Brooks works.

"(Norris) intensified it with additional Mel Brooks-like innovations to make it even more over-the-top," said Minnichelli.

It all adds up to a lot of work for the cast and crew.

The players typically rehearse three to four evenings a week for three months prior to opening night. Every

### LISTEN TO STORY

DOWNLOAD

Presented by: **Volunteer Screening**  
Safeguard your church

### Most Views

1. Police fatally shoot man in Wilmington
2. Harbor Gateway 'beer run' turns into robbery; 2 arrested
3. Inglewood 14-year-old girl with deadly condition is missing
4. Turbulence injures several passengers on LAX-bound flight
5. L.A. forecast: Despite jobless rate, economic recovery has begun
6. Full-body scanners to be installed at all LAX terminals
7. Marina del Rey: What's that smell?
8. DWP: Withheld \$73.5M payment to L.A. was 'business judgment'
9. Man stabbed to death outside filmmaker's home
10. S.O.S. campaign faces tough battle against Torrance school budget woes

### Questions/Answers

Questions and answers on Daily Breeze stories from readers like you. Submit your own question.

### Advertisement

- Does it state anywhere in the Constitution that we as citizens have a right to make a living ... by Jon | 8 Answers
- What's going on with Alpine Village? The Octoberfest tent has been removed. Does anyone know what ... by Cez | 4 Answers
- Jerks driving our children to school. by rosride | 5 Answers
- What happened to Nancy who owned by evagoblin | 2 Answers
- What ever happen to the 2 youth in the killing of Melody Ross? by Dedra Carter | 1 Answer

More questions



More News

- Feds probe rash of turbulence injuries
- Obama signs sweeping Wall Street overhaul into law
- Watchdogs claim Fed's mortgage program not working
- Israel: Specific U.S. assurances on borders needed
- TRAFFIC ALERT:** Motorcyclist down on 405 Fwy and Palo Verde Ave.
- Relief tunnel expected to reach BP's broken oil well this weekend
- Filibuster broken, jobless benefits may flow soon
- Disgraced USDA's Sherrod not sure she would go back
- Obama poised to sign sweeping financial overhaul
- Cameron rebuffs U.S., says no new inquiry on Lockerbie bomber
- U.S. announces new sanctions against North Korea
- UPDATED:** 3 arrested in fatal stabbing outside filmmaker's home
- Suspect held in beating death of OC homeless man
- Advocate group blames lack of fresh food for high inner city disease rates
- Marina del Rey: What's that smell?
- Man ordered to stay away from Jennifer Aniston
- Jesse James cleared to move to Texas with

Saturday for those 12 weeks, the group builds and paints sets, sews costumes and does other materials-based work for the production.

This is all on top of their 9-to-5 jobs as employees for some of the largest aerospace companies in the world.

"Everything has to come together in a highly coordinated fashion, and practicing together and getting the most out of those rehearsals is key to making it effective," said Minnichelli.

Though Minnichelli said that a successful performance and a live, laughing audience is well worth the lack of free time, he emphasized social aspects that make the process leading up to opening night valuable.

"I think what most of us get out of producing these shows is wrapped up less in the final product and more in the mutually supportive, always collaborative ... experiences along the way," he said.

And what does this bunch do when they're not working at the office or rehearsing?

They party. A lot.

"We used to have a rule that we had to have a two-to-one ratio of parties to performances," said Minnichelli, who said cast parties are as elemental as performances for bringing in new talent and keeping people involved for years.

The Aerospace Players also has provided an environment for romance. Minnichelli met his future wife through The Aerospace Players and said there have been at least seven marriages that were byproducts of these shows.

Minnichelli began in the group's first year as a sound board operator and has since directed, operated spotlights and designed sets, in addition to acting. Likewise, the orchestra conductor and the prop mistress dabbled in onstage roles in previous years, said Minnichelli.

"The group seems to place a high priority on encouraging people to get involved in new aspects of (the productions) and try elements that they wouldn't normally try," he said. "It was a lot of fun for me. I had never gotten involved in theater at all before then."

The organization began in 1988 and produced its first show, "Grease," in the TRW cafeteria. Since then, the group has upgraded to the Armstrong Theatre at the Torrance Cultural Arts Center. The Players now have an 18-person orchestra and produce two plays a year.

"We feel like the audience expects a certain level, so there's no going back," Borich said. "We have to get better and better for our audience's sake."

Amy Schellenbaum 310-540-5511, Ext. 6390; [amy.schellenbaum@dailybreeze.com](mailto:amy.schellenbaum@dailybreeze.com)

The Producers

When: Opens July 23 and plays at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday through July 31, with additional shows at 2 p.m. July 25 and 8 p.m. July 29.

Where: James Armstrong Theatre, Torrance Cultural Arts Center, 3330 Civic Center Drive.

Tickets: \$22, \$18 for seniors, students and children through the Armstrong box office, 310-781-7171.

Information: [www.aeaclubs.org/theater](http://www.aeaclubs.org/theater).

BOOKMARK, Print, Email, Font Resize, Return to Top

Local businesses related to this subject [view all](#)

Daily Grill

Restaurant | El Segundo CA 90245

Mattel Toy Store

Toy Store | El Segundo CA 90245

Toyota Sports Center

Skating Rink | El Segundo CA 90245

[advertise your business here](#)

SHARE YOUR COMMENTS GOT A QUESTION?

Type in your comments below

Name (appears on your post) [input field]

- daughter
- **UPDATED:** Police fatally shoot suspected prowler in Wilmington
- L.A. forecast: Despite jobless rate, economic recovery has begun

Comments

Characters left: 4000

Type the numbers you see in the image on the right:



**Post Comment**

*Please note by clicking on "Post Comment" you acknowledge that you have read the [Terms of Service](#) and the comment you are posting is in compliance with such terms. **Be polite.** Inappropriate posts may be removed by the moderator. [Send us your feedback.](#)*

**Primary Engineering, Inc**

Consulting engineering firm located in Fort Wayne, [www.primary-eng.com](http://www.primary-eng.com)

**Invest in Gold: Learn How**

Gold Delivered to Your Door. Free Investor Kit. [Goldline.com/Gold](http://Goldline.com/Gold)

**Obama Urges Homeowners to Refinance**

If you owe less than \$729k [www.SeeRefinanceRates.com](http://www.SeeRefinanceRates.com)

Ads by Yahoo!

Copyright Notice | Privacy Policy | Information | Subscriber Services | Site Map | RSS



MNG Corporate Site Map

For more local Southern California News:

Los Angeles Newspaper group

Copyright ©2008