



## Tabard. A “different” theatre company.

With a solid background in theatre and television production, Cathy Spielberger Cassetta founded The Tabard Theatre Company in San Jose in 2001 as a “different” theatre company. The following distinctives make Tabard the “different” theatre company it has become:

- Producing theatre events that are suitable and appropriate for audiences of all ages – this does not mean that all shows are targeted to children; it does mean that regardless of one’s age, no one will see or hear anything that would be considered “offensive” in word or deed. For artists and audiences who wish to explore more challenging or edgy topics, Tabard introduced Top of the Stairs programming in 2016 -- still Tabard, but PG-13.
- Producing new or rarely produced works is part of Tabard’s mission. Contrary to the belief held by many producers, Tabard has found success producing plays and musicals that are unknown to local audiences. For its 2007-2008 season, for example, Tabard’s 7<sup>th</sup>, the theme was “7-year Itch – Itch for Something New” and produced 3 world premieres – all created by local theatre artists. Since then Tabard has produced nearly two dozen world premieres, most of which have been created by local artists.
- Keeping ticket prices affordable for the average family; in keeping with this mission, the ticket price for youth/students (17 and under) is \$15 – cheaper than a babysitter – and that’s the point!
- Making a difference in the community through the arts, the cast and staff of each production designate a local non-profit that is in some way related to the theme of the show to receive a portion of that production’s concession proceeds. In this regard, Tabard has become a role model. What has always been part of Tabard’s mission and practice since its beginning has since being adopted by other Bay Area theatre companies. Tabard-designated charities have included Guide Dogs for the Blind, Canine Companions, San Jose Police Horses, Girl Scouts of Santa Clara County, EHC LifeBuilders, San Jose Family Shelter, City Team Ministries, Career Closet, Alzheimer’s Activity Center, USO San Jose, and HOPE Services of San Jose, among the more than 60 local non-profits Tabard has designated (some of been designated more than once).
- Producing shows that provide theatregoers with an intimate and often interactive theatrical experience, very important in a culture that increasingly becomes passive in its entertainment.
- Providing visually impaired patrons with a hands-on pre-show experience during which actors describe and pass around significant props and costumes.
- Giving life to the Tabard tag line “Theatre is more than a show” by creating an experience for theatregoers that begins as soon as possible when they enter the venue. This includes making books, CDs, and other items related to the topic or period of the show available so that patrons can extend and enhance their theatrical experience by taking something tangible home. The live theatre experience is further enhanced when possible by providing an intermission event that reflects or enriches the play itself, e.g., Tabard’s chocolate factory for *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*; an English afternoon tea for *Mr. Pim Passes By*; an ice cream social for *More Than Petticoats*, swing dance lessons before *Stompin’ at the Savoy*, a hands-on sound-effects experience before *It’s a Wonderful Life: Staged Radio Play* and Elvis karaoke before *Elvis Has Left the Building*.
- Working collaboratively for what is best for the production rather than working from a place of ego and self-focused motivation.
- Striving to choose healthy ways to express ourselves and choose affirming ways to love each other through the challenges of life – and theatre. In other words, there is no swearing, cursing, foul language, yelling, screaming or any other expression of self-absorbed behavior. Does that mean we don’t get frustrated or angry? Of course not. What it means is that we choose to foster a healthy and family environment by affirming and appreciating staff, cast and crew in what we say and do, engendering loyalty and a sense of belonging.

*continued on the flip side...*

The Tabard Theatre Company quickly accomplished its goal to be a “different” theatre company and achieved this in a crowded marketplace (did you know that there were and still are over 350 theatre companies in the Bay Area?). In striking contrast to most companies around the Bay Area and the nation, Tabard continues to increase its subscriber base and attract top-tier talent. For its first seven seasons, Tabard was a nomadic company, sometimes performing in a different venue for each production. On April 1, 2008, Tabard became the managing and resident company at Theatre on San Pedro Square, which was renamed Tabard Theatre May 2018. While most theatre companies are seeing a decrease in the number of subscribers, Tabard continues to see an increase year after year. A sign of its continuing growth and success, in November 2013, founder Cathy Spielberger Cassetta replaced herself as executive director by hiring Nick Nichols and stayed on as artistic director. Tabard continues to grow and succeed in a crowded marketplace under this leadership team.

## THE TABARD

### *Theatre Company*

**'tab'ard:** \ˈtɑb- ɔrd also -ärd\ n :

- An ancient London inn featured in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, from which pilgrims began their journey to Canterbury Cathedral and at which the innkeeper offered a free meal to the best storyteller
- A tunic worn by a knight over his armor and emblazoned with his sovereign's arms
- The name appropriated by numerous contemporary collegiate literary fraternities
- *A dynamic and imaginative theatre company in Silicon Valley, CA*

*I have the coolest story... Tabard.*



*A 501(c)(3) Non-profit Corporation*

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*Inspiration and Imagination found here. Tabard.*