

Mary Siewert Scruggs

Mary Siewert Scruggs (C86)



Mary Siewert Scruggs, now head of writing and education programs for the Second City Training Center, has the distinction of being the first to write a part specifically for Stephen Colbert — the part of the miller in *Rumpelstiltskin v. the Queen* as part of the Fairy Trials Project she helped create for the Cook County Circuit Court.

Scruggs, Colbert and a group of fellow recent Northwestern grads — all from associate professor Ann Woodworth's acting class — formed Journeymen Theater Ensemble. *Rumpelstiltskin* was one of their first efforts, traveling around to Cook County schools and teaching kids the finer points of contract law with the well-known tale of a custody struggle.

Scruggs based the miller on the character of a cigar-chomping agent, which Colbert often played around with at school. "It was a fun experience, to write something to someone's voice knowing that they would do it," she recalls. She also notes that while Colbert

“really did wear black turtlenecks” at the time, “even then he had a sense of humor about that stuff.”

Besides the Fairy Trial series — which has been in continuous production since 1986 — Scruggs created and performed the solo show *Missing Man* at Live Bait Theater in Chicago and elsewhere, including the New York International Fringe Festival. Her other plays include a co-adaptation with Susan Messing (C86) of *What Every Girl Should Know* for Chicago’s Annoyance Theatre and *Revelations*, which won Northwestern’s Agnes Nixon Playwriting Festival, which focuses on the artistic collaborations of student playwrights, directors and actors.

Scruggs also co-wrote *Process: An Improviser’s Journey* (2007) with Michael J. Gellman (and with a foreword by Anne Libera), published by Northwestern University Press, and *The Second City Guide to Improv in the Classroom: Using Improvisation to Teach Skills and Boost Learning in the Content Areas* (Jossey-Bass, 2008) with Katherine S. McKnight.

MARY SIEWERT SCRUGGS



Chris Cosentino

Mary Siewert Scruggs (C86), 46, Chicago, Jan. 11. A major force in the world of comedy writing, Mrs. Scruggs worked as the witty, caring and beloved director of education and writing programs at Second City's Training Center. She made it her mission to make people laugh and improve the work of her students.

Mrs. Scruggs also had several successful shows in Chicago. She created and performed the solo show *Missing Man* at Live Bait Theater in Chicago and elsewhere, including the New York International Fringe Festival. Her other plays include a 1998 co-adaptation with Susan Messing (C86) of *What Every Girl Should Know: An Ode to Judy Blume* for Chicago's Annoyance Theatre and *Revelations*, which won Northwestern's Agnes Nixon Playwriting Festival for artistic collaborations among student playwrights, directors and actors. Other credits include *Camp Nimrod for Girls* at Live Bait Theater and *Baby Makes Three* at Boxer Rebellion Theater.

She co-wrote two books on improvisation, including *Process: An Improviser's Journey* (Northwestern University Press, 2007).

In the mid-1980s Mrs. Scruggs and a group of her fellow Northwestern grads — all classmates in Ann Woodworth's (C75, GC79) acting class — wrote a series of children's plays created for the Circuit Court of Cook County's Fairy Trials Project, which teaches students aspects of the law. She wrote the part of the miller in *Rumpelstiltskin v. the Queen* for her Northwestern roommate Stephen Colbert (C86) (see **"The Real Stephen Colbert,"** winter 2010).

Mrs. Scruggs is survived by her husband, Richard; a son, William; a sister, Katherine; and a brother, Greg.