Speaker 1: The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Nicki Donnelson: A carefree summer fling causes romantic clashes. Bodies pile up in an Agatha Christie classic, and an imposter leads the FBI on a merry musical chase. That's what Tent Theater and Missouri State University has in store for audiences this summer, during it's 57th season. I'm Nicki Donnelson, and today my guest is Mark Templeton, managing director. He tells us about the line up.

Mark Templeton: We are real excited to bring back one of the most successful shows in our history, and that show is Grease, and that's what we are leading out season off with. Then our second production, which is a play, is based on Agatha Christie's The Mouse Trap. Everybody always loves a great mystery, and that certainly fits that bill. Then, we'll finish our season up with the musical, Catch Me If You Can, which many people are familiar with that story, because it was a movie with Leonardo DiCaprio, but it is a stage musical, it's a lot of fun as well.

Nicki Donnelson: Kim Crosby, a familiar face to the Springfield Community and Broadway, will grace the stage in Catch Me If You Can. Templeton is glad to have her part of a phenomenal cast. Tickets are on sale now for all productions. You can purchase online, by phone, or at the MSU box office. The Tent team is excited to introduce Joe Price as the Theater and Dance department head. One of those duties is to serve as the producer for Tent. "The experience of Tent," says Templeton, "is a unique challenge for all behind the scenes, as well as on stage."

Mark Templeton: You really cannot grasp the concept until you actually witness it taking place, and the fact that yes, every year we actually put up the tent, we have to put a stage inside, lighting equipment, seating and you know, it's like building a house every single year. There's always some new challenge.

Nicki Donnelson: "The team relishes those challenges," he said. And since they will be adapting to some new technology this year, he expects a few surprises a few surprises to show up during rehearsals. He also expects that patrons will see pure magic on the stage.

Mark Templeton: Contractually, we're obligated to present each production as it was written. But sometimes we do have to sale down the technical elements, but there's always some ingenuity and some magic that makes people think how unique the setting is of Tent Theater. A lot of times we'll find these solutions that people will go, "Wow, we never did think of it like that." That's one of the things that make Tent really unique.

Nicki Donnelson: The MSU community and local theater community suffered a loss this year. Byrne B. Blackwood, who was affectionately called Mr. Tent Theater, passed away in January. Templeton invites the community to a series of events to celebrate Blackwood's life.

Mark Templeton: I was in attendance at his final curtain speech, and that was kind of my introduction to tent theater. I never dreamed that 23 years later, I would be where I am today and it's because of him. Over the years, B and I hung out almost weekly. He shared so many stories about tent theater. HE, to the final day ... He was so passionate about Tent Theater. What it contributed to not only Missouri State University, but to the City of Springfield, to Southwest Missouri, and so it is really deserved that we are hosting a special celebration of life event for B Blackwood that is open to all of the public. It's not just a Tent alumni thing. This is for everyone on June 14th, we'll begin with a nice reception at the old glass place to reminisce.

Mark Templeton: The next day will be followed up by an exhibit that will be located in the Craig Hall lobby of lots of B's memorabilia, and some of those are going to be on display, and some of them are going to be up for a silent auction to help benefit his scholarship fund. Then of course, the evening performance of Tent that evening. There's going to be a special picnic prior to the show, and the show itself will be dedicated to B Blackwood, and then on Sunday, these farewell brunch back at the old glass place where there'll be several people to speak, and it just so happens that June 16th is Father's Day, and it's so appropriate that B's son, Randy Blackwood will be one of the speakers at that particular event.

Nicki Donnelson: Register for the celebration of life events on the Tent Theater website. Reserve your tickets now, and while you're at it, reserve a picnic dinner offered by Mambinos. Visit tenttheater.missouristate.edu for more information. I'm Nicki Donnelson, for the Missouri State Journal.

Speaker 1: For more information, contact the Office of University Communications at 417-836-6397.