THE CARNEGIE PLAYERS

20 Years of Theater in Rensselaer 1993-2013

ACT 1 SCENE 1

For several years Rensselaer had been entertained by three theatrical groups: St. Joseph's College performed one or two shows a year and a limited number of persons from the community attended those shows. Long ago the Fendig Theater for Children was established and in its existence hundreds of patrons attended the shows put on by elementary through middle school aged children. The Rensselaer Central High School, and at times the Middle School had productions, but performers were limited to students who were in those schools. There was no place for those out of college to "get on stage". In late 1993 a group of Rensselaer residents came together to talk about opportunities for theater in our community that would be open to all who were interested, particularly adults who had at one time been involved in the theater or who always wanted to be on stage but were never given the opportunity. Those who were instrumental in those early years were Gordon Klockow, Dori Hancock, Marcia Smith-Wood, and Betty Robinson. A small committee was formed and a decision was made to hire a director, hold auditions and perform Bye Bye Birdie at the Rensselaer Central High School auditorium. The plans were grandiose, as there was no money available, no sets constructed, no idea who would direct the play and in fact no promise that the community would embrace this opportunity for theater.

The idea was talked about over coffee, in cars and at civic meetings. A director, in fact two directors were asked to be a part of this first production. These willing souls were Marsha Bockman and Dori Hancock. Dates were chosen for auditions, arrangements made for use of the auditorium and auditions held. A cast was chosen and practice began on the first production of The Carnegie Players.

According to an article in the Rensselaer Republican, there was great anticipation for this play in the community:

Curtain call for the first-time community theater group, **The Carnegie Players**, will be 7:30 Friday August 19 and Saturday August 20 at the Rensselaer Central High School auditorium for the musical, Bye Bye Birdie.

Well over 50 people are working feverishly on stage and off stage to present a great performance of this popular musical.

This is the fist time performance for this newly founded community theater group. The actors, stage crew and orchestra come from Newton and Jasper Counties and are excited about the opening performance.

A few days later the following story appeared in the Newton County Enterprise:

Director Marsha Bockman said, "This musical involves entire families who enjoy the fun of acting and singing together. This makes this play a truly unique and enjoyable performance."

True to Bockman's statement, **The Carnegie Players** has been a "family affair" from the very beginning. At times there have been three generations from the same family either on stage or behind

the scenes. It has not been unusual for mothers, fathers, children, grandfathers aunts and uncles to share the spotlight. From children a few years old to others who are beyond retirement, Carnegie has allowed thespians of all ages to share their talents. During the 20 years of its existence, romance has blossomed. Danielle Pruett and Ben Warren were married, and real life husband and wife, Woody and Barbara Slade were Mayor and Mrs. Shinn in *The Music Man*, both playing those roles twice in separate productions.

Despite the positive reflections in the local newspapers, all was not well, with the Bye Bye Birdie production. People who committed to the play became too busy. Some dropped out. Others were recruited. In fact, at the last minute Mayor Bob Wilcox was asked to be the mayor. Costumes were borrowed from Fendig Theater for Children, or they were made or bought at Goodwill. A sound crew was put together as was a pit band and before the cast could realize it, it was time for all of them to "break a leg". (This would not be a funny statement, as later in the history of this group, people would break limbs, and in fact have to leave at intermission of one play because of illness and a director take over the lead of the play. More about that later).

Bye Bye Birdie opened with a good crowd and great fun being shared. Tickets were reasonably priced, only \$3.50 for adults and \$1.50 for children. With the help of the drama department at Rensselaer Central High School, some donations by generous persons who wanted to see this endeavor be a success and the dedication of a cast who, for the most part, were unsure of what they were doing, could that weekend's performances have occurred. The cast included some first timers to the stage as well as many who had been onstage as high school or college students. After long rehearsals, some changes, lots of compromise, and more than one flubbed line, **The Carnegie Players** were off to a rousing start. It would only get better.

ACT 1 SCENE 2

The theater bug had hit Rensselaer!. The first official board of The Carnegie Players, which was now incorporated, was formed. Gordon Klockow was president, Becky Osborn, vice-president, Susan Darnaby served as secretary and Phil Nagel was treasurer. At large board members included Betty Brown, Tom Landrum, Doug McKinley and Ron Jordan. This group of dedicated persons never gave up and provided the needed foundation for a growing group of actors. So much fun was had with the musical *Bye Bye Birdie* a decision was made to try a non-musical in the spring of 1994. A small cast was needed and a simple set was required. A decision was made to perform *The Odd Couple*, on April 7 and 8, 1995. This would be a much different experience, as the play was to be performed at the Knights of Columbus Hall, in conjunction with their weekly fish fry. Thus, a dinner theater was offered to the community.

The cast rehearsed at the Carnegie Center, in homes and finally at the Knights of Columbus. A good crowd was present each night, the food was delicious and even though this production was not a success in the area of revenue, it helped to draw the attention of our community and build anticipation for future production. As mentioned earlier, changes in cast occurred in this production as well. At the last minute, Justin Steiner took over the role of Oscar Madison, after Bob Duncan, due to circumstances beyond his control, was unable to finish the role. Bob however, would return to future productions.

Now with two successful productions behind them, **The Carnegie Players** began to organize and plan for the future. The group became members of the Prairie Arts Council and rented office space in the Carnegie Center. The Board provided the necessary vision for the success of **The Carnegie Players**,

agreeing and establishing the following statement of purpose. It became the preamble to the constitution for the group:

We hereby recognize, affirm and celebrate the theater as a justified human action, necessary and life-enhancing. Whether it soothes us with refreshing laughter when we are weary, or startles us with uncompromising portraits of social decay when we are complacent, at its best the theater is a worthy action which supports and sustains the health of the society it mirrors. Because of its inimitable power to dramatize the ideas of our great thinkers, it is central to the human education and is a primary source for enriching the quality of human life in our communities. In order to support these ideas with our collective strength, we join together for the common good of theater and life in our community.

By now the Rensselaer community expected great things from The Carnegie Players. In the next few years new faces would appear on stage and more detailed sets would be built. The dream was alive!

ACT 1 SCENE 3

In the summer of 1995, *Annie Get Your Gun* was the musical chosen to be produced. In the spring of that year, while plans were still being made for the play, a request was made by Jim Flickner. It seemed that The Players were being asked to "take their show on the road" though it be only a few miles. Thus with this grand production, held once again at the Rensselaer High School, an additional performance was to be held in Remington at the Fountain Park Chautagua.

August 10th and 11th the play was held in Rensselaer, and Chief Sitting Bull, who would make cameo appearances in future plays was introduced. The leading lady of Annie was Susie Lintner Rayburn who would go on to direct several Fendig Theater productions.

On August 18 the show moved to the outdoor stage at Fountain Park. All afternoon, sets were moved, microphones were tested and costumes prepared. A capacity crowd watched as Annie and Buffalo Bill entertained the crowd. Memories from the actors that night can be summed up in one word: HOT! After running off stage it was not unusual for one or two of the cast members to hop into a car, turn on the air conditioner and cool off. Sweat poured from the cast bodies but when it was all said and done, it was a fun performance. Before an out of town performance would be booked again, consideration would have to be made as to whether or not there was air conditioning.

What the community probably never realized was that it was not uncommon for rehearsals to be held in the high school which was not air conditioned. The Rensselaer Central School Corporation has been very cooperative and supportive of the efforts of **The Carnegie Players**. They have allowed the group to use the high school building from early June until production time. It would be unreasonable for a demand to be made that the auditorium be cooled for practices. The room was always cooled for performances but the public has no idea how many bottles of water were drunk, and how many heat strokes avoided, during often 3-hour-long practices. But in theater, there is no complaining......

There was no spring production in 1996 but plans were being made for the summer musical, *Carousel*. Described as a "dark drama" some wondered if the patrons would support this rather obscure Rodgers and Hammerstein play. But Rensselaer and surrounding areas came through and three performances were held, on August 9th, 10th and on the afternoon of August 11th. Future attempts at a Sunday matinee would prove to be as unsuccessful as the 1996 attempt and much discussion was held in future years about whether or not the public would come out on a summer Sunday afternoon to see a play. For the most part, the answer was "no".

Tickets this year were sold at the usual location: Longs Gifts, Jordans, Bank One and the Gazebo. Of course, cast members sold the most tickets which only proved once again the idea that **The Carnegie Players** is a self supporting group. In all of its 20 years of existence, any profit from a musical or play has gone back into future productions.

By this time ticket prices alone could not sustain the costs of putting on a play. A new opportunity for the community to support theater was offered. A donation of \$25 allowed a person to be identified as a "Friend", \$25 to \$49.99 and you were a patron. If you contributed \$50 to \$99.99 a person or family was designated the honor of being in the Actor's Club, or give \$100 to \$199.99 and you were a member of the Director's Club. Finally any gift over \$200 and you were a part of the Broadway Club. Many people and local businesses have supported The Carnegie Players in this way and their contributions and donations have helped to produce the musicals, comedies and dramas our community has come to love. Also in 1996 you could join the Carnegie Players for \$5 per person or \$15 for a family. Dozens have done so in the last several years.

You would think a group of community actors would have learned a lesson from the past, but these were daring souls. Thus, in the fall of 1996 a special production was held both in Rensselaer and "on the road" in Logansport. The play, *St. Mary's On the Brink*, written by Patricia Ross of Lafayette became a 4 production play that benefited the Emmaus Center, specifically the Morningstar Girls Home, in Logansport. The play, a story about a group of nuns who were constantly in trouble, trying to hide a dead body, was a world premiere. Some of the cast, local high school students, performed in a marching band contest and raced to the theater arriving just in time to go on stage. Proceeds were divided between the **The Carnegie Players** and the Mission and it turned out to be a wonderful outreach for the group. A spring production of *The Murder Room* was performed on April 3rd and 4th, 1997, but this time, the actors did not go out of town to share their performance.

ACT 1 SCENE 4

With the success of Rodgers and Hammerstien's *Annie Get Your Gun*, thoughts turned to another play set in the west. *Oklahoma!* was chosen as the 1997 summer production and a large cast began rehearsal. Working around the Fendig Summer Theater for Children, the Jasper County Fair Queen Contest and ongoing work in the high school it often became necessary for evening practices to be held in places other than the stage area. The large lecture hall was often used, as was the cafeteria at the middle school. Sets could not be constructed until after Fendig's production, which meant that in 3 weeks full sets had to be built, painted and arranged. In addition to that, those on stage had to get used to the actual sets in only a few practices, and the fact that productions turned out as professional as they did proves the dedication of those involved in the plays.

It was at about this time that the following blurb appeared in the programs: What do Alfred Hitchcock, Stephen King and Chief Sitting Bull have in common? Just as Alfred Hitchcock and Stephen King appear briefly in their shows, Chief Sitting Bull has made a cameo appearance in every Carnegie Players musical. Watch for him this evening.

Woody Slade often put on the headdress, as he did in *Annie Get Your Gun*. But others have worn it in plays as well, including Ron Jordan. You just never know where an Indian Chief might appear.

Much discussion was held about the next play which was to be held in January 1998. *Nunsense* was a popular musical and thousands had laughed at the antics of a group of nontraditional nuns. But what

would the reaction of Rensselaer be? A cast of funny ladies was assembled, the lecture hall at Rensselaer was reserved and rehearsal began. Some of the cast members had other obligations, however. Not only was it Christmas time, but at least one Nun was to be on the high school band trip to Florida the week before production. Not to worry, the play must go on! And it did, as perhaps the most popular and profitable play ever produced in the spring/winter.

Both nights the lecture hall was packed. Good thing the Fire Marshall wasn't looking, as people were literally sitting in the aisles. Audience members were picked out and made fun of but "nun-the-less" a good time was had by all!

By this time, nearly 150 persons had performed in Carnegie productions and there was no stopping now. A local artist, Rein Bontreger started air brushing signs for the plays that would go up on the courthouse lawn. Actors would perform at the local Rotary meetings and directors would be interviewed by Wally Laird of WLQI..

In the summer of 1998 the popular *Music Man* was produced. Kent Sayler, who had the role of Harold Hill in the Fendig Theater for Children production of this play, reprised the role for **The Carnegie Players** and the performance could not have been better. Popular songs such as "Pick-A-Little" and "76 Trombones" filled the auditorium and applause was overwhelming. Backdrops were used, sets were constructed and the boys' band performed using the "think method".

The public never knew some of the pitfalls that the Players had to struggle through. Once a drainpipe, which runs from the roof of the stage at the high school, to the bottom of the building, via the inside of the stage leaked and some sets were ruined. Another time props and costumes were thrown away by well meaning persons who thought they were trash while in fact they were needed for a play. In the end, the applause and the laughter from those who sat in the audience made it all worth while.

The Carnegie Players had become a family. Some members had moved out of town. Others had passed away. Some were now married and children were on the way. From time to time a former cast member would return for auditions and share their talents on stage. The casts and crews would laugh together, cry from time to time and as in any family, have "discussions" about this or that. But it all was done in a family atmosphere. It did not matter if the lead of a play had a problem or if it was a member of the chorus. All were treated equally. Through the ups and downs of several productions, much had been learned and much was to be learned. The group had grown and would grow even more as people came and went. But, for now, "on with the show",

ACT 1 SCENE 5

In the summer of 1999, three performances were held for the cruise ship murder mystery, *Anything Goes*. The cast was large and the set was somewhat difficult to build as scaffolding was brought in to build a two tier ship deck. Mark Brouwer and Tiffany Jordan who would go on to regional theater were in this show as were many others from the past, and a few new faces as well.

The winter play in 2000 was a murder mystery/comedy called, *Catch Me if You Can*. (no connection to the 2002 movie with Leonardo DeCaprio). This production was held in the large lecture hall of the high school and was well attended by the community. A surprise ending kept everyone guessing and the audience was "sworn" to silence about the outcome of the play.

Perhaps the most challenging production took place in the summer of 2000. *My Fair Lady* involved a large cast, several set changes and very elaborate costuming. A highlight of the play was a scene in which the entire cast was on stage wearing either black or white. The horse race scene, is well remembered by many as well as the performance by Kevin Long and Sharon Urbano. In the August 8, 2000 Rensselaer Republican, Tammy Madson, who attended My Fair Lady wrote the following editorial note:

Kudos to The Carnegie Players for putting on such a find production of My Fair Lady. Everyone involved in the play should be commended. Thank-you to The Carnegie Players for bringing wonderful productions to our town...and what a talented group they are! I look forward to future projects. Bravo!"

By now **The Carnegie Players** were well established. They had a following of patrons. Many cast members had been in several productions. Others continued to serve on the Board of Directors and support the theater in behind-the-scenes ways. With a donation by Wally Laird, the Paul and Mabel Laird Endowment had been established through the Jasper Foundation. A new storage building had been constructed and every year the collection of costumes and props grew as the community embraced the efforts of **The Carnegie Players**. Soon it would be 10 years since the first production. Time flies.

ACT 1 SCENE 6

The winter production of *The Mouse Trap* found the return of a constant supporter of The Carnegie Players. Bob Garrity had been involved in various ways with the group for many years. His background of theater brought excitement and demanded perfection of those on stage, and off stage as well, as director of *The Mouse Trap*. Bob pushed and urged the actors to do their best, as other directors had done in the past and would do in the future.

An unknown play to most, *The Pajama Game* was performed in the summer of 2001. The story of labor relations and the love between factory workers brought large crowds to the auditorium and the play was well received. This production found Ron Jordan on stage in a major role. Ron has been involved with Carnegie since its inception, usually behind the scenes, on the board or doing whatever is needed. He proved himself as an actor in this musical comedy/drama. No winter production was held in 2002 but with summer right around the corner, attention was focused on yet another obscure production, *State Fair*. This story of the Frake family going to the state fair, winning ribbons for a "special mincemeat recipe" and kids falling in love left the community wanting more and encouraging **The Carnegie Players** to do something grand for their 2003 10th year anniversary. A highlight of *State Fair* was the golf cart turned truck which made its way across stage with none other than Logan Torbet playing the role of a noisy pig. Logan, who had been in many of the productions, did a wonderful job, as did a quartet of farmers who donned hog snouts and sang love songs to their sows.

Dial "M" for Murder found its way to the stage in the winter of 2003. Held on two nights and led once again by Bob Garrity, crowds were not as large as had been hoped, but a horrible winter of snow and cold was a contributing factor. This play was dedicated to Wendy Hughes, long time Board member, actor and supporter of the theater group. All in all, throughout the productions and the ups and downs, **The Carnegie Players** had accomplished what they sat out to do in the beginning: bring quality, family oriented theater to the Rensselaer Community.

The 10th year celebration found *Hello*, *Dolly!* on the playbill. A smaller cast than in some years was no indication that the theater bug was slowing down. Instead, great community support was given for this production as it had been given in the past.

And so it comes down to this: a dream is shared and a group of people work hard. They draw in others and practice and plan. They make mistakes, have some celebrations and great fun working together. A family is established, where love and support are offered, where trust is developed and where the inner feelings are expressed in roles that people never knew they could perform. The sound of applause and laughter all make it worth while: the hours of rehearsal, the sacrifices and the frustrations. Thank you Rensselaer for accepting The Carnegie Players. We hope we have not disappointed you.

CURTAIN CALL

Over the years, several special dedications have been made and many people have been honored for their work with The Carnegie Players. In August, 2002 the Community Theater Award of Excellence was given to Wally Laird. Presented by the Indiana Community Theater League for "Excellence in support of local community theater" the dedication read:

As the The Carnegie Players approach their 10 anniversary, we would like to honor a gentleman and his family who have been instrumental in supporting our community theatre. This year we would like to recognize Wally Laird and his family. Wally first became involved with The Carnegie Players by being a frequent patron of our shows. As time went by, he became a member of our group and eventually established the Paul and Mabel Laird Endowment for The Carnegie Players through the Jasper Foundation. In time Wally became a board member and appeared in his debut performance in, The Pajama Game in 2001. Likewise he appears in tonight's show, State Fair. Wally is a hardworking member of The Carnegie Players and his knowledge has helped the organization grow. Because of Wally's and his family's help, the Carnegie Players remains a viable community Theater in Rensselaer. Wally, we thank you and your family for the life-enhancing commitment to allow theatre patrons a chance to escape from the real world for a few hours and for the opportunity for people of all ages to become involved in theatre."

On a much sadder note, Tom Morris, who was an active member of The Carnegie Players, passed away in 1998. That year, the following dedication was offered:

The Carnegie Players would like to dedicate this year's production to Tom Morris. Tom's unexpected death on July 6 left us in shock, realizing a dedicated performer had been taken from us. Tom had been involved with Carnegie Players productions from the start. Urging his wife, Terri, with her involvement in Bye Bye Birdie, to catching the theatre bug and becoming involved with The Odd Couple. But acting on stage was just a part of Tom's involvement. Building sets, securing props and costumes, encouraging others behind the scenes and always being there is what Tom Morris was about. Anything you asked Tom to do, he would do willingly. Tom's life was a witness to his faith, his love for his wife and family and dedication to the Fine Arts in our community. Thank-you Tom for what you have done, the lives you have touched and your dedication. We will miss you.

In February 2001, the following dedication appeared in the program for *The Mousetrap*:

The Carnegie Players are dedicating this play (and more plays in the future) to Woody and Barbara Slade. They have worked since its formation to make the Carnegie Players a viable interest in our community. As they move to another community, their hearts will remain with us, as ours will always remember their most selfless and talented dedication to the work of the Carnegie Players. God bless you, Woody and Barbara.

Finally, in January, 2003, this dedication was placed in the playbill for *Dial M for Murder*:

We are very excited to dedicate tonight's program to Wendy Hughes. She has been a vital member of The Carnegie Players since its inception. She has been on stage in many productions, served as assistant director, president and vice- President of The Carnegie Players and has served on the Board of Directors for six years. She has been a guiding force in the creation and development of The Carnegie Players, an organization of which our community can be proud. We honor You tonight, Wendy, and thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

ACT 2 SCENE 1

In the summer of 2004, **The Carnegie Players** began their second decade by producing the very popular *Guys and Dolls* Ticket prices were a bit more than the first year's production (\$3.50 for adults and \$1.50 for children) as adults paid \$6.00 and children \$3.00. Still a bargain as the cast of 35 rehearsed, memorized and sang their songs. Directed by Karen Kelly-Dugan and Dan Earhart, with Kylie Thiel serving as accompanist, the play was produced July 29th, 30th and 31st. In the show, a local minister (Phil Leichty) played the gangster Nicely Johnson as the Save-A-Soul prayer meeting tried to...well, save souls. At this summer production, a new scholarship fund was established with proceeds from the concession stand going to the scholarship fund. This award is to be given to a deserving high school senior who will be pursuing a degree in the area of theater/music..

In the program for *Guys and Dolls*, the following was reported:

The gentleman who served The Carnegie Players as its first President is Gordon Klockow. You could consider Gordon a combination George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. He served as our first President and was instrumental in formulating a constitution that has only been amended once. Gordon spent considerable time researching constitutions from other community theater organizations that would serve as guidelines for our constitution. Gordon has served as president of Carnegie Players for two years and still remains a consulting source for past and current boards. Gordon was active on stage as he held roles in Bye Bye Birdie, Annie Get Your Gun, and Carousel. He helped out behind the scenes with The Odd Couple and St. Mary's on the Brink. The Carnegie Players would like to pay tribute to Gordon this year by awarding him the "Indiana Community Theatre League" Friend of the Theatre Award of Excellence. Congratulations Gordon.

In June 2004 the Rensselaer Republican's Progress Edition shared a story written by Maura Giles:

She reported that after watching the Fendig Summer Theater for Children's productions for more than 30 years, one day Dori Hancock, Marcia Smith-Wood and Betty Robinson were drinking coffee when the idea for Carnegie Players first came up. They decided that Rensselaer needed a community theater. They had no supplies, no funds and had to borrow a small sum of money to start. They were able to pay back that loan after the first two performances. After two productions The Carnegie Players became members of the Prairie Arts Council. Performing the play Annie Get Your Gun in 1995 at Remington's Fountain Park Chautauqua, Ron Jordan remembers it was over 90 degrees and no one wore makeup. He had to hoist his 8 year old daughter into a window to unlock the dressing room door, and the show went on as expected.

Kiss Me Kate was the 2005 summer musical. Hoosier Cole Porter provided the music and words. The original play, on Broadway, had over 1000 productions and won the Tony Award. If the Tony was

awarded in Rensselaer, The Carnegie Players production would have received it. John Rahe, theater director at St. Joseph's College directed the play and Jennifer Frankowski was the musical director. Karen Kelly-Dugan led choreography and Kylie Thiel was the accompanist. The play was held in the RCHS auditorium and had a cast of dozens. As John Rahe wrote in the program, "it was time to brush up your Shakespeare, because it's curtain time and away we go, another opening of another show." Kevin Long and April Potts were the leads of this play, and, it was a hit!

Perhaps now is the time to recognize some of the area businesses who have supported Carnegie Players with much more than just monetary gifts. Ever since it began, Jordan's has been there to lend props, bring and return set pieces and provide support. They, along with The Gazebo and Long's Gifts were always places you could purchase tickets. Countless businesses let The Players put up posters and table tents for those businesses which served food. Donations and discounts were provided by many local restaurants. Without the support of our local businesses, Carnegie Players would not be successful. We tip our hat to you. Also a big thanks goes to St. Joseph's College for sharing props and costumes, as well as Rensselaer Central High School. The local Rotary Club always is glad to host The Players a few days before the play, so actors can practice and share their talents. It really is a community theater group.

ACT 2 SCENE 2

In 2006, **The Carnegie Players** produced a different kind of winter play. Entitled *Love Letters* it was a set of comedic monologues. The first of several Dinner Theaters, held in the lecture hall of RCHS, the cast tells the story through love letters exchanged over a life time. Karen Kelly-Dugan and Dan Earhart tell how the two characters grew up together and went their separate ways. A dance troupe performed several dances and others read letters too, including Maura Giles and Robert Garrity. Catered by Devon's (restaurant) the night was a great success. "Carnegie by Candlelight" continued for several years.

The summer play in 2006 was the popular *Fiddler On the Roof*. Tevye, the lead character was played by John Wilson, who had been involved in several Carnegie Plays in the past. He was also involved in the Fendig Summer Theater for Children as well as high school productions at RCHS. The leading female role, Golde, was played by Barbara Slade, one of the founding actors of Carnegie Players. Others in the play were Heide Rahe, who plays the matchmaking Yente as well as dozens of others as the play had a large cast of 55. Directed by Karen Kelly-Dugan, Maura Giles was her assistant. Dan Earhart was the musical director. Held the last weekend of July, attendance was great and the production was a success. This production was sponsored by Farm Credit Services of Mid America. The play, written by Joseph Stein is based upon stories by Sholem Aleichem. The original Broadway play opened in 1964 with Zero Mostel playing Tevye.

An editorial written by Verna McNeal stated the following:

"Let me begin by saying that if you did not see The Carnegie Players production of 'Fiddler on the Roof' you missed a rare treat. John Wilson was outstanding as Tevye and Barbara Slade gave an excellent portrayal of Golda. Their supporting cast was talented and enthusiastic. Again, well done Carnegie Players. We are fortunate to have both you and the Fendig Children's Theater. We have so much to be thankful for here in Rensselaer. I can't imagine living anywhere else."

The tradition of offering a scholarship continued, with Jennifer Williams receiving the 2006 scholarship. Also honored at the production was Natasha Cox, Farm Credit Services "Friend of the Theater" award and Bob Kurtz of WRIN/WLQI who was also honored as a "Friend of the Theater".

By the time 2007 rolled around, Rensselaer was ready for an invasion of Nuns. *Nunsense II* was produced February 2 and 3 in the RCHS auditorium. A buffet supper was served as the audience prepared for the antics of the Sisters! The show costs patrons \$7 each and with dinner the cost was \$16.50 or \$30 a couple. Marcia Smith-Wood was the director. She led 6 of the Little Sisters of Hoboken through BINGO, songs, involvements with gangsters and kids too. This production was a sequel to the original 1998 production of *Nunsense*. Three original nuns returned to reprise their roles: Claudia Earnest, Maureen Egan and Susan of the Straw. They were joined by newcomer Nuns: Becky Scherer and Eizabeth Ruska. A special request went out for 'beehive wigs' for the nuns, and of course, the community responded and they were found. Supported by the pit orchestra of Anne-Marie Egan, Rick Mangas and Robb Theil, the production was a great success. At the last minute, and we do mean the last minute, Logan Torbet stepped in and played one of the nun's parts, due to illness of the original cast member. Talk about saving the show!

ACT 2 SCENE 3

In the summer of 2007 a new and different format for Carnegie was experienced. *The Melody Lingers On* was produced July 26th, 27th and 28th. This production featured the songs of Irving Berlin which were familiar to the patrons attending the play. John Wilson portrayed Irving Berlin and Becky Sherer returned from *Nunsense II* to join the cast. Logan Torbet, a long time member of **The Carnegie Players** joined the cast. The play was produced in conjunction with Midwest Handling Concepts LLC and Farm Credit Services. An advertisement stated, "Come on along and step back in time with the Carnegie Players as they present the Musical Revue *The Melody Lingers On*. Hear the famous songs of the era: Alexander's Ragtime Band, Blue Skies, Easter Parade, White Christmas, The Girl That I Marry, Puttin' on the Ritz, God Bless America and other Berlin favorites as the story of Irving Berlin's life is told. The Iroquois Valley Harmonizers and area church choirs will be guest performers. Karen Molter was the director and was supported by Claudia Earnest, musical director and April Potts, assistant director/choreographer. On one night of the production, three rows of seats were reserved for the "Red Hat Society" and they were filled. Jessica Peterson and Meghan Earhart were the recipients of the Carnegie Scholarship for 2007.

The Melody Lingers On was dedicated to Dr. Robert Garrity, Ph.D and semi-retired professor of Philosophy and English at St. Joseph's College. Bob served on The Carnegie Players Board, directed local productions and appeared in several shows. The program noted that Bob was a walking encyclopedia of knowledge in regards to theater and everything that is related. It also said, "Bob, we thank you for your dedication to theater in not only Jasper County, but everywhere you have lived. Gloria, we thank you for sharing Bob's time with us.

In the winter of 2008, The *Odd Couple* was produced in conjunction with "Carnegie By Candlelight". However, this was a different version of the popular play. This was a version that casts females as actors in the play. No longer does Felix Unger and Oscar Madison control the stage. Take the same concept of slob verses neat freak, change the names to Florence Unger and Olive Madison and you have the same comic mayhem as the original play. April Potts and Jean Monfort were cast as the two roommates and they were joined by Liz Ruuska, Claudia Earnest, Rebecca Armstrong, Melanie Ruuska, Rick Mangas and Eric Ruuska on stage. Christine Haskell was the director.

High Society was the 2008 summer production and followed the format set forth the previous year. Instead of Irving Berlin, the play featured the music of Indiana native Cole Porter. The production was based upon the play *Philadelphia Story* and was made into a movie. The songs in this play are well

known and Dan Earhart, musical director stated that this play had one of the strongest chorus groups that he had ever worked with. Directed by Jean Monfort, she dedicated the show to her mother, Louisa Monfort. With her, Jean said, she would not have the love of theater that she has. Set in 1938 it included 24 songs by the actors and just as many by the orchestra. Finally a note in the program, "Thanks to Darrald Crynes for always knowing where everything is or can be found in the high school"

ACT 2 SCENE 4

For two weekends in March, 2009, the stage at Rensselaer High School became a radio studio. *Greater Tuna* was the spring show starring Mark Brouwer, who played 10 different roles, and Roger Burns, who also played 10 different roles. Taking place in Tuna, Texas a snapshot of a day in the life of members of this small town caused the audience to laugh loudly. Jean Monfort was the Stage Manager and a delicious dinner was served before the show.

In the summer of 2009, the ever popular *South Pacific* was Carnegie's production. Led by director John Rahe and musical director Kylie Shedd, this cast of many took us back to the days when life in the military might have been easier than it is today. However, the play asked the question, "What are you against and what are you for? Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical was created from a series of short stories entitled, *Tales from the South Pacific*. Nellie was played by Jean Monfort and Emile de Becque by John Wilson. Butch Zenner was the 2009 winner of the \$500 Carnegie Players Scholarship.

The spring play for 2010 was *Murder at Cafe Noir*. A dinner theater event, this play was led by a crew of 10 actors who kept the audience guessing as to who committed the murder. The actors interacted with the audience, walking among them and asking questions. Jean Monfot was the director and the dinner was provided by Devon's Restaurant, with dessert provided by Clauss Bakery and Cafe.

In the summer of 2010, Carnegie did something it had never done before. It re-produced a play originally performed in 1998. *The Music Man* was popular when it was first produced in Rensselaer and was just as well received 12 years later. Under the direction of Nick Earnest, who also played Professor Harold Hill, this play had one of the biggest casts ever before on stage. Also, Woody and Barbara Slade reprised their roles as Mayor Shinn and Eulalie Mackecknie Shinn. Two actors played the same part of Olin Britt on two different nights: Rick Mangas and Ben Light. The traveling salesmen opened the play with a stirring rendition of "Rock Island" and by the end of the show a "boys band" performed for a group of very proud parents. Todd Samra and Claudia Earnest were co-musical directors and Kelsey Rae Witt, Allisandra Potts, Andreanna Potts and Logan Torbet served as the choreography team. The set, constructed under the direction of Ron Jordan, was exceptional!

ACT 2 SCENE 5

Kiss the Bride was the 2011 spring production, centered again around a meal before the play. Michael Garrity directed the play who said, "I will forever remember just how fun the whole experience was. That's not to say it wasn't always without its more stressful moments, such as when a blizzard covered Rennselaer in snow, but we carried on and had a very enjoyable production." a synopsis of the play is: Here's a madcap comedy with a groom out to murder his (frequently married and very wealthy) bride on their wedding night. Having hired a couple of bumbling bad guys to do the job, the groom mistakes an introverted wedding guest for the hired killer, sending him upstairs with his wife. Soon after, the hit man (and wife) arrive, having kidnapped an unsuspecting bride at the wrong reception. The kidnapped

bride soon escapes from the trunk of their car and, with the help of crazed couples and uninvited guests, she sends the newlyweds fleeing and the audience rolling down the aisle with laughter!

Red Hot and Cole was the summer play in 2011. It was produced once again at RCHS at the end of July. Michael Booth, the director wrote: "This is a review, steeped in the Cole Porter aura. It is an invitation into the life of Cole Porter. The play embodies the grand and lavish lifestyle that he lived and advances to the rest of Cole's life changed forever by the tragic nature of Cole's riding accident. Both Cole and Linda (his wife) age and Cole is faced with the harsh reality that he will soon die. 33 songs filled the evening from this Indiana born composer. Long time Carnegie Player Logan Torbet was the recipient of the Scholarship in 2011. He is pursing a musical theater degree from Wright State University in Dayton Ohio. He was unable to be present to receive his award because he was a summer student at Interlochen Center for the Arts in Michigan.

The 19th year production for Carnegie Players was *The Sound of Music* in the summer of 2012. Directed by newcomer Tammy Craig who also served as accompanist this love story between a nun and a wealthy land owner was very well received. The play was plagued by actors being ill and in fact, a 20 minute unforeseen intermission was taken one night due to one of the leads nearly fainting. Between Postulates, Von Trapp children, love affairs, Nazi soldiers and a very familiar plot line the audience was treated to a wonderful evening. Kendal Ford and Ryan Musch were the leads in this production and were supported by a cast of dozens.

The Garrity-Laird Scholarship went to Katie Davisson who will be attending St. Joseph's College. As the memories of "So Long Farewell" Carnegie closed the curtain on yet another successful production.

In the spring of 2012 and again in 2013, there were no plays produced. Instead, Carnegie hosted a "trivia night" in which teams competed for honors of knowing the most about trivial things. The money raised in these events support the Scholarship Fund.

With the 20th year celebration, Carnegie produced *The King and I* in the summer of 2013. Christopher Louck and Christine Haskell reprised their roles as leads from the Fendig Summer Theater production of this play performed some 20 years ago. A cast of children rounded out the production of this popular play. Karen Dugan-Kelly was the director and she was assisted by Musical Director Claudia Earnest. They were assisted by Production Assistant Kelsey Rae Witt.

CURTAIN CALL

In the summer 2013 newsletter, Karen Kelley Dugan, Claudia Earnest and Ron Jordan summed it all up very well. They expressed the feelings of many when they wrote:

Hello all, I'M BACK...and boy am I excited about this summer's production of "The King and I". When I moved back to Indiana from California in 2002, I was honored to be asked to direct my first Carnegie production of "Hello Dolly". I had a blast and was really impressed with the level of talent in our community. Over the next few years I directed "Guys and Dolls", assisted on "Kiss Me Kate" and lastly one of my favorites, "Fiddler on the Roof. This year I was approached to direct again for Carnegie's 20th Anniversary. WOW!!! And here is why I should have not been so surprised by the level of talent in our community: Fendig Children's Theater. Our King this year, and our Anna this year are Dr. Christopher Louck and Christine Haskell. They are reprising their roles from their Fendig production 20 years ago this summer. Isn't that so cool? Of course they have grown up a bit, but both are telling me that all their lines and songs are coming back to them. I can't wait to see how this all comes together!

-Karen Dugan Kelley

Wow! Can these actors sing! It's good to work with many veteran actors as well as those new to The Carnegie Players, including all the kids. While this show does not have big "show stopper production numbers, I'm sure you will be very pleased and entertained by the great voices and telling of this elegant story. It takes many local musicians sharing their talents to make a show happen. I am always grateful to the "Pit Crew" who give up two or three weeks to make the music to support our actors. Many churches, schools and St. Joseph's College help provide instruments and sound equipment for our shows. The saying goes, "it takes a village to raise a child." Well, in community theater, it takes the whole town to produce a show. Thanks to everyone for sharing their talents for twenty years. Here's to many more.

-Claudia Eamest

Twenty years ago. Can you believe that the Carnegie Players has been in the community theater movement for twenty years with 2013 marking the end of the second decade? The years have seen many changes within Carnegie as well as adapting to changes in society. Some shows have been better than others, and some more popular, but the most important aspect has been the support of the greater Rensselaer community. Without the audience and the support of local businesses and patrons as sponsors, the phrase "the show must go on" would not be heard to the present day. I would like to thank all who have been Board Members, Directors, Pit Musicians and for the support staff behind the scenes for these last twenty years. I would also like to thank all the actors and actresses that have stepped into character to make ink on the page become live theater on stage; whether it was a musical, a drama, a comedy or a murder mystery. Theater is alive and well in Jasper County.

-Ron Jordan

33 plays. Hundreds of actors, set constructors, musicians and production staff. How do you count success? Carnegie Players celebrates 20 years this year and we want to thank you, the community of Rensselaer and surrounding areas for your support and encouragement. Without you, none of this would have been possible. Look for great things to come in the next 20 years: New faces, new plays, and some old memories brought to the stage. We, the Carnegie Players, take a bow and thank you for 20 great years.

The Carnegie Players Boards of Directors

An index of those who have served on the Board of Directors

1995

President: Gordon Klockow Vice-President: Becky Osborn Secretary: Susan Darnaby Treasurer: Phil Nagel

Members: Betty Brown, Ron Jordan, Doug McKinley

1996

President: Gordon Klockow Vice-President: Ron Jordan

Secretary: Susan Darnaby Treasurer: Phil Nagel

Members: Betty Brown, Tom Landrum, Doug McKinley, Becky Osborn

1997

President: Ron Jordan
Vice-President: Wendy Hughes
Secretary: Susan Darnaby
Assistant Secretary: Terri Morris
Treasurer: Deb Price

Members: Betty Brown, Doug McKinley, Woody Slade

1998

President: Ron Jordan Vice-President: Wendy Hughes Secretary: Terri Morris Assistant Secretary: Woody Slade Treasurer: Deb Price

Members: Janice Mercer, Betty Brown, Brian Mays

1999

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Assistant Treasurer: Brian Mays

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Members: Mary Hamer, Claudia Earnest, Members: Sharon Armold, Kendra Berenda, Wendy Hughes

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Assistant Treasurer: Ote Wood Membership Chairman: Ron Jordan

Members: Bill Oates, Wendy Hughes, Wally Laird, Bev Crynes, Judy Smith

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President: Ron Jordan
Vice-President: Claudia Earnest
Secretary: Jan Merritt
Assistant Secretary: Janice Mercer
Treasurer: Sharon Armold

Assistant Treasurer: Ote Wood Membership Chair: Judy Smith

Members: Bev Crynes, Bob Garrity, Wendy Hughes, Wally Laird, Bill Oates

2003

President: Ron Jordan
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Assistant Secretary: Janice Mercer
Treasurer: Sharon Armold
Assistant Treasurer: Ote Wood

Membership Chair: Judy Smith Members: Bev Crynes, Bob Garrity, Wally Laird, Kevin Long

2004

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Treasurer: Sharon Armold
Membership: Judy Smith
Assistant Secretary: Jan Merritt
Assistant Treasurer: Mark Querry

Members: Bob Garrity, Wally Laird, Claudia Earnest, Darrold Crynes, Karen Kelly Dugan

2005

President: Ron Jordan
Vice President: Bob Garrity
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Treasurer: April Potts
Membership: Claudia Earnest
Assistant Secretary: Jan Merritt
Assistant Treasurer: Karen Kelly Dugan

Members: Darrold Crynes, Maura Giles, Suzi Jordan, Wally Laird, Bob Sagendorf

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Members: Darrold Crynes, Karen Dugan Kelly, Maura Giles, Wally Laird, Kathy Parkinson, Eric

Ruuska, Bob Sagendorf

2007

President: Ron Jordan Vice President: Eric Ruuska Secretary: Beverly Crynes Treasurer: April Potts Membership: Jayne Houston

Members: Ben Geesa, Janelle Harper, Wally Laird, Lori Loughmiller, Kathy Parkinson, Paige

Stillabower, Ote Wood, Becky Zunac

<u>2008</u>

President: Eric Ruuska Vice President: April Potts Secretary: Ron Jordan Treasurer: Ote Wood Membership: Jayne Houston

Members: Been Geesa, Wally Laird, Lori Loughmiller, Kathy Parkinson, Christine Haskell, Becky

Zunac

2009

President: Ron Jordan
Vice President: Christine Haskell
Secretary: Barbara Slade
Treasurer: April Potts
Membership: Lori Loughmiller

Members: Bob Garrity, Wally Laird, Amy Pfaff, Woody Side, Donna Wetzel, Ote Wood, Becky Zunac,

Nancy Klocow

<u>2010</u>

President: Ote Wood Vice President: Christine Haskell Secretary: Ron Jordan Treasurer: April Potts Membership: Amy Pfaff Members: Jessica Chapman, Gordon Klocow, Nancy Klockow, Wally Laird, Kyler Laird, Jan Merritt, Barbara Slade, Becky Zunac

2011

President: Ote Wood Vice President: April Potts Secretary: Ron Jordan Treasurer: April Potts Membership: Jan Merritt

Members: Jessica Chapman, Kelly Ford, Gordon Klockow, Kyler Laird, Barbara Slade, Herlinda Teach, Becky Zunac

2012

President: Ron Jordan
Vice President: April Potts
Secretary: Jan Merritt
Treasurer: April Potts
Membership: Kyler Laird

Members: Linda Buschman, Roger Buschman, Rick Comingore, Gordon Klockow, Kevin Long, Herlinda Teach.

Karen Van Duyn

2013

President: Ron Jordan
Vice President: Kevin Long
Secretary: Jan Merritt
Treasurer: April Potts
Membership: Linda Buschman

Members Beveraly Crynes, Darrold Crynes, Michael Booth, Roger Buschman, Gordon Klockow, Kyler Laird, Debbie Wilson

PERSONS WHO HAVE APPEARED ON STAGE AND WHO WORKED BEHIND THE SCENES TO MAKE THE CARNEGIE PLAYERS PRODUCTIONS A SUCCESS.

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- 2 The Odd Couple
- 3 Annie Get Your Gun
- 4 Carousel
- 5 St. Mary's On the Brink
- 6 The Murder Room
- 7 Oklahoma
- 8 Nunsense

- 9 The Music Man
- 10 Anything Goes
- 11 Catch Me If You Candlelight
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WHITTEN, STEPHEN 9

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ALL ATTEMPTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO INCLUDE EVERYONE WHO HAS BEEN A PART OF A CARNEGIE PRODUCTION, WHETHER ON STAGE OR BEHIND THE SCENES. IF A NAME WAS LEFT OUT PLEASE CONTACT THE CARNEGIE PLAYERS:

(carnegie.rensselaer@gmail.com) SO THAT ANY FUTURE LISTS CAN BE COMPLETE