



Backstage

Fall 2021

Pierre Players Community Theatre

Reinventing and Innovating Pierre Players

By Alisa Bousa, PPCT President



Learning how to maintain a community theater and keep our doors open during a global pandemic has not been an easy task. But Pierre Players Community Theatre (PPCT) has embraced this opportunity to look at how the organization can reinvent and innovate moving forward.

Shifting New Season's Start

One of the most obvious changes is shifting the time frame of our season starting in January 2022. Pierre Players Board of Governors decided to change the season schedule from one which typically began in September and ran through August of the following year to one which will begin in January and run through December of the same year.

The change aligns PPCT's seasons with our fiscal year, which we also moved to a calendar year. It also allows patrons to purchase season memberships in December as holiday gifts for family members or friends before the new season starts.

The Board had been looking at this concept when PPCT had to cancel "A Little Piece of Heaven" earlier this year due to the pandemic and a lack of people at auditions. PPCT decided to

reschedule the production for this fall as part of the 2020-2021 season, which created the perfect opportunity to start the new season in January 2022.

Number of Productions

Even before COVID, PPCT was experiencing a shortage of volunteers in all areas of the theater—people to be in shows, build sets, operate the lights and costume productions. For this year's "Radium Girls," PPCT relied on a former volunteer who now works for Black Hills Community Theatre, Rodger Hartley, who spent two weekends setting Pierre Players' stage lights and training a new volunteer to run them.

Due to this shortage of volunteers, PPCT has decided to move from a five-show to a four-show season for 2022. The change will allow PPCT to consolidate its talents into providing four quality productions while working to recruit and train volunteers this next year. It will also allow for a larger time slot at the Grand Opera House for Little Players' summer production.

The Board of Governors is exploring opportunities to find and train people in the skills necessary to put on a production. We are also looking to find new ways to invite newcomers to the community or those who might not know about us to come learn about our community theater.

Innovating Improvements

This past season, PPCT received streaming rights for four of its five productions. To stream the productions securely, PPCT had to update its website with secure pages that had SSL encryption, create a YouTube page and set up an online payment option.

When we had to delay "A Little Piece of Heaven," PPCT instead offered its first completely digital online production. "The First Step," written by Kathleen Maule Holen, was inspired by a true story of New Year's resolutions, friendship and purpose in Hot Springs, S.D. PPCT promoted the virtual performance through special videos and posts on Facebook, as well as emails to our membership.

This fall, PPCT's Board of Governors is hiring a facilitator to conduct long-term strategic planning and board development. We plan to discuss the potential hiring of an executive director, an online reservation system and facility improvements to enhance the theatrical experience for patrons and volunteers.

Even though PPCT's 2020-2021 season has been a year of change, the theater experienced strong attendance numbers at 2,364 people seeing our four productions to date and 91 tickets sold for the "The First Step." We have one show remaining in the 2020-2021 season—"A Little Piece of Heaven" on Oct. 22-24 and Oct. 28-30. ■



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Michele Beeler

PPCT Hires Michele Beeler as New Business Manager



Pierre Players patrons may have noticed a new face running box office this past year. PPCT hired Michele Beeler as its new business manager after Deb Hiatt stepped down from the position last fall after 18 years of service.

Originally from Marshalltown, Iowa, Beeler became involved in PPCT when she moved to Pierre in 2008. In addition to appearing on stage, she has served as director, costumer, props master, house manager and producer for numerous productions.

Beeler helped develop PPCT's Little Players Children's Theatre program and has been instrumental in PPCT's Promotions Committee and costume department.

Beeler previously served two, three-year terms on PPCT's Board of Governors and was serving her third term when she was hired as the interim business manager last September.

Beeler lives with her husband, Brad, and four-legged child, Nellie. She works in the training office at the South Dakota Department of Transportation and is co-coordinator of Pierre School's Destination Imagination. Beeler enjoys hunting, crocheting and reading. ■

Simple Ways to Support PPCT

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Support Pierre Players every time you shop with Amazon! Simply shop at smile.amazon.com and select Pierre Players. Amazon will donate 0.5% of qualifying purchases to PPCT.

Menards

Help us build sets! Bring your Menards rebate receipts when you come see one of our productions. We'll send them in and use them for 2022 show supplies.

South Dakota Gives

Pierre Players is uniting with other nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations across the state to celebrate generosity by asking their community of supporters to, together, raise as much money as humanly possible on Nov. 30, 2021. To donate to Pierre Players, please visit www.pierreplayers.com/donate. ■

PPCT Remains Resilient Thanks to Arts Grant Funding

Thanks in part to arts grant opportunities, Pierre Players was able to keep its doors open and provide live theater to the community despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. This past year, PPCT was the recipient of two such grants.

Pierre Players was awarded a \$5,000 Emergency Assistance Grant from the South Dakota Arts Council. The grant was distributed with support from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act to help secure jobs and keep nonprofit organizations in South Dakota's statewide arts community operational in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.

Pierre Players also received a \$10,000 grant from Arts Midwest's United States Regional Arts Resilience Fund, a national recovery initiative to help under-resourced arts and culture organizations

weather the COVID-19 crisis.

PPCT used the funds to help pay for rent of the Grand Opera House, utilities and our part-time business manager's salary. This allowed PPCT to pay its normal operating expenses without sacrificing the quality of our productions. We also used the funds to explore expanding our services to online viewing and improving PPCT's website and social media presence.

PPCT has applied for American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding through the National Endowment for the Arts and will also be applying for an ARP grant through the South Dakota Arts Council. The funding is to help support jobs in the arts sector, keep the doors open to arts organizations, and assist in the response to and recovery from the pandemic. The funds must be used for day-to-day operating costs. We will inform the membership of the outcome of these grants. ■



2022 SEASON LINEUP

Laughter, Catchy Songs and Sinister Suspense

Making God Laugh

Directed by Alisa Bousa



"If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans." Pierre Players will kick off its 2022 season with the dramatic comedy

"Making God Laugh" by Sean Grennan.

The play follows one typical American family over the course of 30 years of holidays. Starting in 1980, Ruthie and Bill's grown children—a priest, an aspiring actress and a former football star, all return home, where we learn of their plans and dreams as they embark on their adult lives. The empty-nester parents contend with their own changes, too, as old family rituals are trotted out and ancient tensions flare up.

As time passes, the family discovers that, despite what we may have in mind, we often arrive at unexpected destinations. I think audience members will see a little bit of their own families reflected in this hilarious, yet touching, production and will be reminded about what matters most.

Ordinary Days

Directed by Lydia Kanz



"Ordinary Days" by Adam Gwon tells the story of four young New Yorkers whose lives intersect as they search for

fulfillment, happiness, love and cabs. This is a refreshingly honest and funny musical about making real connections in the city that never sleeps (but probably should at some point).

When Deb loses her most precious possession—the notes to her graduate thesis (found by

the ever-optimistic Warren)—she unwittingly starts a chain of events that turns the characters' ordinary days into something extraordinary.

Through a score of vibrant and catchy songs, their experiences ring startlingly true to life. This is for anyone who's ever struggled to appreciate the simple things in a complex place. As told through a series of intricately connected songs and vignettes, "Ordinary Days" is about growing up and enjoying the view.

With equal doses of humor and poignancy, the show celebrates how people's individual stories come together to show how unique your home can be, even if your home isn't in NYC!

The Crucible

Directed by Joshua Penrod



In the insular, Puritan community of 1692 Salem, Mass., a group of young girls are found dancing in the woods

and immediately fall ill. When no earthly cause can be determined, the citizens of Salem suspect that a more sinister force may be at hand—the Devil. As long-held grudges turn to violent disputes, secrets are exposed and the line between truth and pretense becomes increasingly blurry. The citizens' dogged determination to root out evil becomes more dangerous than the perceived evil itself.

When the burden of proof is invisible and the crime too terrible to name, everyone becomes a suspect, and no one is safe. "The Crucible," Arthur Miller's remarkable 1963 fictionalized play of the Salem witch trials, remains as relevant as ever. The accusations and ensuing trials push the village into a hysteria, which results in

the arrest of 200 villagers and the deaths of 19. Miller, who was wrongly accused of communism during McCarthyism in the 1950s, wrote the play as an allegory, revealing the political and moral parallels between the Salem witch trials and the McCarthy trials of his own time.

"The Crucible" carries with it a stern warning: in every community torn by suspicion, the most dangerous threat may be the community itself.

'Til Beth Do Us Part

Directed by Audra Cardwell



PPCT will present the laugh-out-loud, comic romp "'Til Beth Do Us Part" by Jessie Jones, Nicholas Hope and Jamie Wooten.

Suzannah is a woman fighting to keep her life in order while trying to earn a higher position with her long-term employer, Celia Carmichael. Her husband, Gibby, is not assisting with household duties and depends strongly on his wife to bring him sandwiches while he loosens his tie on the couch. Enter Beth, the Southern, highly-motivated charmer with impeccable timing and almost irritating perfectionism. She couldn't have come at a better time as Suzannah's boss is flying in for an impromptu dinner meeting.

Beth works to do anything she can to make the household run more efficiently, and Gibby quickly discovers he is at the top of her list. Gibby creatively attempts to get rid of Beth, aided by his wife's best friend, Margo, and his best friend, Hank. Their antics come to a hilarious height just as the boss arrives for dinner.

This fast-paced, family-friendly farce is sure to greatly entertain audiences. ■



PPCT Welcomes New Volunteers

Our volunteers make our organization great! Please thank and help welcome our new volunteers from this past season.

- Brooks Bowman
- Gracie Bowman
- Crystal Buckenberg
- Emily Chamberlain
- Angel Corrales
- Emily Costar
- Michelle Deyo-Amende
- Jack Garrett
- Kristina Harms
- Avianna Knochel
- Amie Krause
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- Jesse Parsons
- Ashlyn Pitlick
- Tedd Rieke
- Miranda Roberts
- Amber Sargent Granberg
- Erin Schoenbeck
- Helen Squyer
- Michael VanDeWiele
- Julio Vasquez
- Evan Wempe
- Willow White

Pierre Players is a place for everyone. We are committed to sustaining a diverse, inclusive and equitable space where everyone who walks through the theater doors—patrons, artists, volunteers and vendors—feels valued and respected regardless of gender, age, race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, education or ability.

As a community theater, Pierre Players seeks to inspire its community through promoting diverse stories, artists and ideals. To learn more about getting involved, visit www.pierreplayers.com/involvement/volunteer. ■



Warming up with "Night at the Museum" during "Charlotte's Web."

LITTLE PLAYERS— More Than Just Theater

By Michele Beeler, Little Players Co-Director

It was opening night of "Charlotte's Web" as Wilbur wiggled through Act I, and I made a note to have the backstage manager make sure he goes to the bathroom before the next night's performance. While we have all heard the phrase "the show must go on," nine-year-old Aidyn epitomized it as he stayed on stage until the curtain closed at intermission before running to the bathroom.

I read an article this summer that listed the 25 life skills learned as a theater major and wondered what 10 years of Little Players' programming has taught our students about life. Hannah Carda and I have been doing this long enough that we have watched these kids grow and develop into some amazing young adults. As one parent wrote, "Our daughter has become a lot more confident and outgoing this past year, and you are a big part of that!"

Little Players' participants never cease to amaze us with their dedication to a production. Children are hesitant to try our program because they are worried about being on stage. However, it's such a small part of what we do that by

the time we perform, it's become second nature.

Being part of live theater requires motivation and commitment, and Little Players' students take pride in doing their best. As we rehearse scenes over and over, we learn that merely "getting it done" is not acceptable. Actors learn to do it correctly through practice, cooperation and hard work. As the students memorize lines and learn the technical aspects of a production, they must do it quickly and accurately. Part of that skill requires listening and engaging with the cast and crew to learn their role.

During Little Players' 2021 summer camp, third to fifth graders wrote their own skits based on the "Pete the Cat" children's books. As a team, they voted for their favorite storyline and created the characters, words and movements to complete the skit. They wrote creative stories, listened to each other's creations and learned about democracy when they voted. The success of the production required contributions from all involved and encouraged them to respect and trust the abilities and talents of their teammates.



In Little Players' third to fifth grade workshop "Pigs & Wolves," students worked in small teams to build their own sets and costumes. They were given boxes and paint to create the houses. With very little guidance, these kids created the houses out of their imaginations. Both plays had a house of sticks, but each group created a unique design. Their creative problem-solving skills were put to work as they found costumes and props for their play in 45 minutes. They learned to work under pressure, meet deadlines and to have fun.

Little Players' kindergarten to second grade workshop "Pirates" focused on rules and procedures of theater. We purposely worked on the stage when another production was in process so we could practice self-control. "If it's not your prop, don't touch it." The students learn to respect the space both as actors and as audience members. We practice getting on stage and performing short skits. They then sit in the audience and watch their friends and focus on being quiet and attentive. The students performed two plays. In one, they each memorized two lines and created their own props. In the other, they choreographed their own movements to tell the story more effectively.

Little Players' Drama Club is designed to help middle school students transition from one school situation to another. They spend time in different teams to create a cohesive ensemble that can work in any situation with anyone. We play improv games to increase their adaptability



Allie Goodman and Chisum Brakke face painting and learning.

and flexibility to try new ideas and accept new challenges. A successful production means there is no "we" versus "they" behavior, and every individual plays an important role in the show. They are expected to help with Pierre Players' productions by painting sets, ushering, cleaning the theater, selling concessions and other tasks.

Drama Club students learn to speak clearly and thoughtfully. We practice constructive criticism and feedback as we discuss performances and skits. They develop a healthy self-image of knowing who they are and how to project their individuality. Drama Club provides opportunities for the students to show leadership skills by directing skits, leading games and choosing cast members.

My family and friends who haven't done theater (which are few) shake their heads at all Little Players' activities. They ask how it is possible to have "fun" when we plan night after night, teach weekend after weekend, and run rehearsals day after day after day. "That's fun?" Yes. It is. I cannot imagine wanting to spend my time doing anything else! ■

PPCT Awards Two Scholarships

Pierre Players this spring awarded \$500 scholarships to Mesa Winder, Pierre, and Kelton Quinn, Milesville, for their excellence to, growth through and dedication to the fine arts.

Winder plans to study arts education/museum and culture at the University of Arizona, and

Quinn plans to study architectural design/building construction at Michell Technical College this fall.

These scholarships are made possible by concession purchases made at Pierre Players' performances. Thank you for your generosity in helping to make these scholarships possible. ■

Spectacular Sponsors

Pierre Players' season sponsors help in our mission to bring community theater to central South Dakota. Please give the following 2020-2021 season sponsors a great thank you by shopping at their businesses or using their services.

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2022 SEASON



PIERRE PLAYERS

COMMUNITY THEATRE



MAKING GOD LAUGH

DRAMATIC COMEDY BY
SEAN GRENNAN

FEB. 25-27 / MARCH 3-5

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT
BY PLAYSRIPTS



THE CRUCIBLE

DRAMA BY
ARTHUR MILLER

OCT. 7-9 / OCT. 13-15

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT
BY DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE



ORDINARY DAYS

MUSICAL BY
ADAM GWON

APRIL 29-MAY 1 / MAY 5-7

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT
BY CONCORD THEATRICALS



'TIL BETH DO US PART

COMEDY BY
JESSIE JONES, NICHOLAS
HOPE, JAMIE WOOTEN

DEC. 2-4 / DEC. 8-10

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT
BY DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE

SCAN ME





Pierre Players 2022 Season Membership

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<https://pierreplayers.com/involvement/seasonmembership/>.

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COMMUNITY THEATRE

PO Box 933
Pierre, SD 57501



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COMMUNITY THEATRE

PIERRE PLAYERS

at the Grand Opera House

PO Box 933
109 S. Pierre St.
Pierre, SD 57501

605.224.7826
info@pierreplayers.com
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Don't Miss Out—Purchase Your 2022 Season Membership

Thank you for supporting Pierre Players Community Theatre and attending our performances! We ask that you continue to show your support of Pierre Players, especially during these new and changing times, by purchasing your 2022 season membership.

A Pierre Players membership is still one of the best deals in town. You get more than tickets to the season performances—you get a theater experience that you won't soon forget.

Purchasing a season membership benefits both Pierre Players and our patrons. Pierre Players benefits because we have a secure income base for our upcoming season and expenses.

Patrons benefit because they receive tickets as a discounted price, a membership card and a postcard reminder of each show prior to the box office opening.

Those who purchase their season membership before the start of "Making God Laugh" on Feb. 25, 2022, will also receive a free ticket to be used during the 2022 season. This free ticket is for you to help introduce someone new to the experience of live theater in Pierre.

Season memberships can be purchased online at www.pierreplayers.com/involvement/membership. Or complete the membership form in this newsletter and mail it with a check to Pierre Players. ■