

HISTORIAN'S CORNER

Tell us what you remember as highlights of the Orange Players experience. A few random memories follow. In the first production of "Fiddler on the Roof" (Gary Scarpa, who directed it with his wife, Francie, was our fiddler on the roof—literally sitting high up outside the proscenium arch with a fiddle to open the show!) there were over sixty people in the cast. Every night before the performance, all of us gathered outside the stage door in back and Francie led us in the traditional Orange Players energy circle. When the strains of "Tradition" filled the air, ALL of us were on the Amity Stage—the old one!! Something I remember from that show is that, as Fruma Sarah, I made my entrance on the shoulders of one of our very talented male dancers. My filmy white costume came to the floor, so it looked as if I were airborne. One night, I nearly was. That night he young man started whirling madly around the stage, with me aboard. I held on, with knees clamped so tightly around his neck and shoulders, it's a wonder I didn't cut off his circulation---singing at full volume the whole while. At times, I thought I would land on top of the piano, and Peg Meisenhelder, the pianist, thought so too. We survived—barely-- and suspected that the young man had partaken of an illicit stimulant before going on stage—a theatrical no no! It happened only once!

"Brocko, the Prince Frog", featured an elaborate set and visual effects. Performed at Mary L Tracy, we found that the water effects had seeped onto the gym floor, where a thrust stage had been built, causing minor damage to the newly refinished gym floor. Somehow, it was repaired, to our great relief!

"Separate Tables", the Terrence Rattigan play, was also produced at Mary L. Tracy. This was a two set show-with a magnificent fireplace that took several husky men to turn for the second scene. Not as long as the scene changes for "Pajama Game", but longer than anticipated. The scene set in the dining room required each table to be set with edibles. Mary Aloï and Peg Meisenhelder were responsible for this aspect, and kept the actors from ptomaine poisoning, by making sure that they (the plates) were made up fresh every night.)

"The Music Man" saw us back at Amity. The tryouts for that show brought out droves of auditioners. There were 75 children alone, not counting the adults. About 60 of them sang "Tomorrow" as their audition piece. There were about 60 people in that cast. Elaborate hats were made for the ladies under the direction of Ruth Ray. Some of these creations may still be found in our costume closet.

That show was the first that Hunter Spence, former property master of the Yale Repertory Theatre and an instructor at the Yale School of Drama, designed for us. The hand painted books on the shelves in the library scene and the train for the opening salesman's scene. Were memorable, created by Hunter and assistant Marty Saverese. (Her son Michael played Winthrop). There was a revolving interior/exterior set piece for Mrs. Parou's house (played by Joan Stenner), which this time revolved with ease. An Orange Players romance, which started in "Flower Drum Song" resulted in the marriage of Barbara Oxsalida and John Romano, who were involved in this production as well, – Barbara as Marian, the Librarian, and John as the Musical Director. A cast member overheard the kids in the uniformed children's band onstage planning to put "Hi Mom!" on the tops of their hats, which they planned to doff at the end of their number. Needless to say, the plan was nipped in the bud!

Tell us your favorite (or not so favorite) memories. We'll be glad to share them.

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