



New Kensington Civic Theatre
January 2014
Callboard

Well, we kissed 2013 good-bye and welcomed in the new year of 2014. Some quietly, some frantically and some with a simple toast. Time marches on and we are looking forward to the second production of the season.

AUDITION NOTICE:

Auditions for “Boeing, Boeing” will take place Sunday, January 5 and Monday, January 6 at 730PM at the workshop on the corner of Carl and George. The cast consists of two men and four women. Ron Ferrara is directing this hilarious comedy to be presented March 13-16.

MONTHLY MEETING:

Our next meeting is Friday, January 10 at 8PM at the workshop. Why not stop by and catch up on the news. If you haven’t been to a meeting for awhile, why not start with the first meeting of the New Year?

SIDE NOTE:

I hope everyone is enjoying the “15 Minutes with...” segment of this newsletter as much as I am. I am impressed with all of the varied backgrounds of each of my “subjects” and with how much they enjoy and have been drawn to the theatre; in spite of the hard work and obstacles that we often have to overcome to produce a show! Be aware that I am hoping to highlight every active member at one point or another. No one will be spared! Just a “heads up” for y’all!

This month I had the pleasure of chatting with Mary Ann Justham. As with most of the “veterans” of NKCT, 15 minutes just isn’t enough time to relate all she has experienced by doing live theatre. However, I will give it my best shot! (Perhaps I should change this to “30 Minutes with...?”) !!!!





Essentially, Mary Ann was born on the stage; her mother was a musician and singer who performed in live theatre in Pittsburgh. Mary Ann began performing at age 3 for “mini-audiences” her parents would somehow gather together. She was selected to be the cymbal player in 1st grade at Mt. Vernon grade school and subsequently graduated to playing the piano for the music classes. At the age of 8, she played “Gretel” in a Girl Scout production of “Hansel and Gretel.” At last, a “lead” role! But, her real accomplishment was going from grade to grade reciting “Little Orphan Annie” from memory and acting out various parts of the poem.

Mary Ann was active in both Alice Klinke’s drama club at Ken Hi and Charlie Davis’ *Swing Out* musicals at IUP (where she received her Masters in Music Education). She didn’t become active with NKCT until 1970 when she saw NKCT’s first musical, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. The following year, she was in the chorus of *Oklahoma*, directed by Fred Thickey. In 1972, she became the musical director for *Fiddler on the Roof*. Ultimately, she was the musical director for 15 NKCT musicals.

She fondly remembers these musicals; especially the hundreds of little girls auditioning for the part of Annie; all singing “Tomorrow.” In this same production of *Annie*, she had to sing Cyndi Debor’s part from the orchestra pit when Cyndi lost her voice! Incidentally, *Annie* sold out for the 3 scheduled performances and a 4th show was added!

Mary Ann enjoyed being musical director; but, she longed to be IN the musicals. She got to tap dance in *Anything Goes*, she played the accordion as Sister Mary Hubert in *Nunsense II* and she broke her tail bone doing a dance routine with Billy Mitas while auditioning for *South Pacific!* The best role, however, was when she was cast as Golde in the 2nd production of *Fiddler on the Roof*. With fondness, she remembers playing opposite Steve Pastrick’s Tevye!

And, then, there were the traveling Christmas shows. Everyone rehearsed, traveled, partied and had full time jobs and survived! In order to avoid getting baby-sitters, they even put their kids in the shows. Because of this early exposure to the theatre, her son, Stephen, became an actor and director.

Comedies were her forte and she was fortunate to be cast in 15 comedies. She especially loved her Neil Simon roles. Playing Bunny Flingus in *The House of Blue Leaves* with Bob Stein and playing Olive, opposite the late Pat Martini in *The Female Version of the Odd Couple* were two of her favorite roles. Mary Ann survived being too short, too fat and too thin for roles. She was too thin to play Bloody Mary in *South Pacific* and had to be padded for *Effects of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds*. Eventually, Mary Ann graduated to older roles in *Steel Magnolias*, *Social Security* and *Dearly Departed*.

In 2006, she was fortunate to be selected to direct the 2nd production of *The Female Version of the Odd Couple* starring Mary Ferrara and the late Pat Martini. We filled Penn State for 4 shows on a Mother’s Day week-end, giving carnations to all Mothers who attended.

So, there you have it! Mary Ann has built sets, painted flats, worked props, ushered, sold refreshments, sung, danced, acted and directed! Lately, she has been working the box office with Nora Ann, Tootsie and Carla Ann. What could possibly be on the horizon?

*Respectfully submitted for your enjoyment,
Cynthia M. Ansani*