



# The Encore

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 1

NOVEMBER, 2000

## A Bit of the Past

Remember the familiar Thespians logo with the mask, the dagger, the laurel leaves and the horns? Just as it is a part of this newsletter, the logo was a part of the programs we created, and it was on the shingle we got during our initiation. It serves as a symbol of The Penn State Thespians and ties the generations together. Some lucky Thespians, in years gone by, received this image in the form of a pendant. Unfortunately, the custom of getting the pendant upon initiation or being able to purchase it disappeared thirty years or so ago.

Well, TAIG is bringing it back. We have used Don Stohl's key as a model and contracted a jeweler in Illinois to cast a new mold. The first shipment should be ready sometime toward the end of November, and we are making the new memento available to you. Since most of you men would prefer not to wear a pendant, we have universalized the key and made it into a 3/4 inch lapel pin



The new TAIG 3/4 inch lapel pin shown at actual size.

constructed of metal with 14k gold overlay. Cost of the pin, which also includes shipping and handling is \$15.

If you are interested in purchasing a pin, do the following: Write a check for \$15 per pin made out to Penn State Thespians. Provide your name and complete address for mailing purposes. Send to: TAIG c/o Carol Whittaker, 219 Shady Drive, State College, PA 16801.

Depending on the demand for the pin, it may take six to eight weeks for delivery if we run out of pins from this initial order, but be patient, we will get it to you as fast as we can.

## 103rd Season *continued from page 1*

The Penn State Bookstore. Penn State students compete in various categories for \$2000 in cash prizes and are judged by a panel of distinguished students and faculty members from the Penn State community. This year's production was again successful, with one of the largest audiences in the show's history. Schwab was packed, and you know how exhilarating that can be!

Our first musical production of the semester will be *A Funny Thing Happened on The Way To The Forum*. This show, written by Burt Shevelove and Larry Gelbart with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim will be presented in Schwab Auditorium on November 11 & 12, 2000. The November 11th performance will be at 8:00 p.m. and the November 12th performances will be at 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. *Forum* has experienced a recent resurgence in popularity as a result of its recently closed revival on Broadway starring Nathan Lane. *Forum* was last produced by the Thespians during our 1977-78 season. We think that the music, story, and comedy of *Forum* is

just the thing to kick off our first musical of the season. Ticket prices are not yet available, but as the show approaches, you may call our office at (814) 865-9461 for more information.

Finally, on a personal note, I was deeply saddened to learn of the death of Llewellyn Fisher a few months ago. I had the opportunity to meet Lew during the 100th Anniversary Reunion, where we determined that he was the oldest living member of Thespians. Lew had a wonderful time that night at the Reunion Dinner and even took the stage to entertain us during the open mic portion of the evening. He will be greatly missed. We are grateful for the financial support that Lew provided to the organization and as a result of his generosity, we will be dedicating our fall production of *Forum* to his memory.

I encourage you to keep abreast of the happenings of our organization by visiting our web site at [www.clubs.psu.edu/PennStateThespians](http://www.clubs.psu.edu/PennStateThespians). The site features news and information on current events within the club as well as information about our

upcoming shows. You can also find pictures from some of our recent productions. The site also features an alumni section with a list of Thespians alumni who maintain e-mail addresses. Take a moment to look at this list to see if your name is on it. If it's not, let me know and I will make sure that it gets posted. If your name is already there, take a moment to insure that the correct e-mail address is listed.

I hope that you will have an opportunity to journey to State College during the coming year to see one of our productions. If you have any questions about the club, I encourage you to contact me at the Thespians office at (814) 865-9461 or via e-mail at [was136@psu.edu](mailto:was136@psu.edu) I am grateful for the support that our alumni provide, and I look forward to seeing you this year at one of our productions.

In Thespians,  
William A. Schwab '01  
President, Penn State Thespians

Guess Who Answer: Ruth Yeaton

## Thespians Club Announces Its 103rd Season

With the start of the new semester just around the corner, the Thespians Club is busy preparing for its 103rd season of providing theatrical entertainment to Penn State and the State College community.

As the Thespians President for the 2000-01 season, this is my fifth year with the club. My first show was *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* in November 1996 where I served as the Lighting Designer. Since that time, I've been involved with Thespians in a myriad of areas — mostly backstage. However, I did make an appearance as a cast member in our April 1997 production of *Damn Yankees*.

Currently a senior majoring in Accounting and International Business, I recently completed a study aboard semester in Cologne, Germany as well as an internship with IBM in Armonk, NY. As a result of these activities, it's been over a year since I've been directly involved with Thespians, but I'm anxious to get back to work this fall to make this one of our best seasons ever!

And, to answer a burning question that almost everyone affiliated with Penn State asks me when we first meet, I'm NOT related in any way to the namesake of Schwab Auditorium . . . at least not that I know of! Still, it fills me with pride when I think about all of the Thespians shows that have been held within Schwab since the club opened it with its performance of *A Night Off* in 1903.

We have an excellent season on tap for the coming year. We opened the season with our annual production of *Synergy—The Penn State Student Talent Show* on Saturday, September 23 at 8:00 p.m. in Schwab Auditorium. *Synergy* is sponsored by The Penn State Alumni Association, The Office of Unions and Student Activities, and

*continued on page 4*

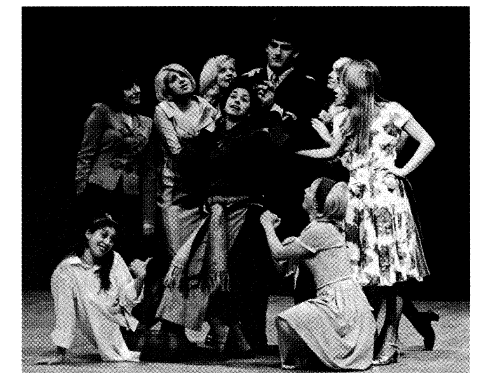
## A Man For All Seasons

What does an All-American football player at Penn State do during football season when he has just had knee surgery? Ask Mike Reid. In the fall of '67, that was his dilemma, and much to our good fortune, he found Thespians. As a matter of fact, he was a big success in the character role of Big Jule in *Guys and Dolls*.

Mike continues to return to Penn State to share his talents with us. On Saturday, November 11, the world premiere of "Prairie Songs", his newest work, will be presented at 8pm in Eisenhower Auditorium. His commissioned composition will include text from American poets and be performed by the Amernet String Quartet and the Pennsylvania Chamber Chorale.

A former all-pro with NFL's Cincinnati Bengals, today, Mike is one of America's most recorded composers. For the last two decades, Mike Reid's songs have been recorded by such acclaimed popular performers as Willie Nelson ("There You Are"), Bonnie Raitt ("I Can't Make You Love Me"), Ronnie Milsap ("Stranger in My House" and "Lost in the Fifties Tonight"), Collin Raye ("In This Life"), Anita Baker, Alabama, The Judds, and many others. Seventeen of his songs have gone to Number One on the charts. His most recent of these is "Everywhere," the title track and hit single from Tim McGraw. He is a two-time Grammy Award winner and has been named ASCAP's Writer of the Year.

In recent years, Mike has turned to writing larger works that "represent a deeper place in the soul," such as the remarkable song-cycle "Quilts" for the Tennessee Dance Theatre, the musical, *House Divided*, and "Tales of Appalachia" for the Kandinsky Trio. "Quilts" has been enthusiastically received at performances in Nashville, the SPOLETO Festival, and Symphony Space in New York City. The New York premiere of "Quilts" was covered by ABC World News Tonight. *House Divided*, based on the Civil War, premiered at the Tennessee Performing Arts



Mike Reid, center, as Big Jule in *Guys and Dolls* with Gay Eger (see Alum Profile) and the "Dolls."

Center in May of 1994 to great critical acclaim.

Also in 1994, Mike was honored with a commission from a consortium of nine arts organizations along the Appalachian Mountain Range to write a quartet for the Kandinsky Trio and guest storyteller. "Tales of Appalachia" received its world premiere at the Center for the Performing Arts at Penn State in October of 1995 with the New York premiere at the Miller Theatre of Columbia University. More than sixty cities across the country have presented "Tales."

Mike collaborated with librettist Sarah Schlesinger on a one-act opera for the Metropolitan Opera Guild and Opera Memphis that explores the celebrity in contemporary sports. The opera, entitled *Different Fields*, premiered on Broadway in 1996 and has since been produced in Memphis, Nashville and by the Cincinnati Opera. His most recent project with Schlesinger, the musical *The Ballad of Little Jo*, received a 1997 Richard Rodgers Foundation Award and opened the 2000-2001 Steppenwolf season.

In addition to his talents as a composer and pianist, Mike has released several recordings of original music including the recent Columbia CD "Twilight Town." Mike is also a recipient of the Thespians Distinguished Contribution to the Arts Award.

# Thespians Get New Advisor

Penn State Thespians has a new advisor! After many years of service working with the undergraduate club, both Carol Whittaker and Margaret Lloyd are resigning from their advisory positions. While their outstanding guidance and able assistance will be missed, the club is happy to welcome their new advisor, Gerald ("Jerry") K. Henry, Jr. When asked to help us introduce him to the TAIG membership, Jerry offered the brief biography included here.

He's a graduate of Penn State . . . a very good start! He worked in industry for 15 years at Corning and Jostens, in both finance and human resources. Currently, Jerry serves as Assistant to the Dean, College of Education, Human Resources and Administrative Services.

As to his theatre background, he has been quite active with State College Community Theatre, having appeared in several productions as well as working backstage. He has served on the SCCT Board of Directors since 1995, was their treasurer in 1997 and 1998, and has been president of the SCCT Board of directors for the past two years. In addition, he was and is producer for their 1999 and 2000 seasons, which includes the often hectic pace of the summer season at Boal Barn Playhouse. He's well-seasoned in the performing, technical, and administrative areas.

Jerry tells us he adopted a little girl last September, a beautiful Jack Russell terrier name Lucy. He's not married, nor planning on it.

But he is definitely looking forward to working with Penn State Thespians as they continue their more-than-a-century-old tradition of quality musical theatre productions. Jerry points out that he wants and plans to be their advisor, not take over and do everything for them. It is the students' organization and their responsibility, as it always has been.

We wish Jerry all the best as he starts this new venture. May he find it to be as much fun and as rewarding for him as our Thespians experiences were for all of us.

This publication is available in alternative media on request. Penn State is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and the diversity of its workforce. DS40381jlg

## TAIG Fund and Support

Since two years ago, when we began asking for your help in supporting today's Thespian operations, Thespian alums from all over the country have generously donated over \$22,000. That fund has enabled TAIG to make purchases for Thespians of things they badly need but can't quite squeeze into their tight budgets (remember?). Purchases have included a portable keyboard, a computer/printer and the die for a lapel pin (to be offered to undergrads and alums). As I write this, Thespians are reviewing and prioritizing their wish list in order to propose the next round of TAIG purchases.

Wouldn't you like to join in this support? Or renew your original gift? Thespians production and administrative expenses keep rising with each show, but ticket prices must stay low to compete with the vast assortment of entertainment now available on campus and in town. Alumni donations can help keep Thespians healthy despite this squeeze. Use the form on page 3 or, if you already make an annual gift to Penn State, just designate Thespians to receive a specific portion of your donation. They really do appreciate our help.

Bill McTurk '48  
Chairman, TAIG Gift Fund

## It Happened Like This!

On a Sunday afternoon in late January, 1931, I was walking from Mac Hall to the side entrance of Schwab. Earlier that day the coed on duty at the 4th floor hall phone had yelled for me. "Hello," a man introduced himself. Sock Kennedy, director of Thespians . . . they were over there in Schwab rehearsing for next Friday's revue, kicking off Senior Ball weekend . . . he'd heard about me, this freshman entertaining at all the girl's parties . . . "would I come over to talk to him?"

That's why I walked in the side door to see a guy we know as "Sock." Up on stage three or four fellows were working on a skit—one named Ken Holderman. Sock escorted me to the practice room on the Old Main side, asking what school I was in, how everything was going, what was my hometown, what had I been doing on the stage back in good old Reading, Pa. All so casual, warm, with genuine interest. Then hesitatingly—almost embarrassed to do it—he asked, "Can you do a time step?" I stood up and did that classic, standard step. Well, as I soon learned was Sock's customary, enthusiastic, expressive style, he waved his arms up and around me and said, "We've gotta do a dance together!"

In five days, between my classes, he taught me a hooper's tap dance, which we performed in that show. Yes, I guess I was the first female dancer in Thespians, but there were two other coeds in that gender-bending January '31 production; Marge

Fisher and Marge Smith were town girls whom Sock had persuaded to act in a sketch which also needed a ten or eleven-year old boy. Billy Dye, son of Dr. William S. Dye, a popular, wonderful English Lit professor, played that kid's role.

Little did I realize it at the time, but my love affair with Thespians had begun and so had the one with that guy I first spotted on stage. All four years in school I played in shows; Sock directed all of them. He and I often entertained at campus and tour events. And when Sock and his date and Ken and I popped in at big formal fraternity dances, or casual houseparty ones, we'd usually be asked to do a number. In our modest way we were Fred and Ginger years before the fabulous real Fred and Ginger.

That Sunday afternoon almost seventy years ago charted the rest of my life - a Thespian show, terrific Sock, that talented senior upon stage. Ken and I were married for fifty years, with loads of theatrical dabbblings sprinkled in. It would be stretching it to say that our two daughters Kenna and Vinnie, were bonded to Thespians from birth, but not stretching it much. Our dear, old friend, Julius J. Epstein wrote some clever lyrics for early Thespian shows and, in Hollywood, he wrote a pretty good movie too. I can hear Julie quipping, "For Grace and Ken, Thespians was the start of a beautiful friendship."

Grace Holderman '34 Edu

## THESPIAN CONTRIBUTION FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

My gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is to benefit Penn State Thespians. (XXTPT)

My check is enclosed, payable to Penn State.

Please charge my  MasterCard  VISA  Discover  American Express

Account # \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

My company's matching gift form is enclosed.

Please complete this form and mail it to: Thespian AIG, 17 Old Main, University Park, PA 16802-1500  
For questions, please call: (888) 800-9163

AAKEAT

## Alum Profile: Gay Eger Crawford, Class of 1969, Major: Spanish

Gay Eger was truly an active, multi-talented undergraduate member of Penn State Thespians. From on-stage turns to work behind the scenes, Gay was involved in many Thespian productions and carried her involvement in music and theatre into her professional and family life.

Gay's first Thespian appearance was as a dancer in the original musical *Troubadour*, a tale of knights and castles, wizards and witches. She worked on crew for *Brigadoon*, and lights and crew for many other shows. She then appeared in and served as assistant choreographer for *Carnival*, and showed off her full range of singing, dancing, and acting ability as the fiery Anita in *West Side Story*. After graduation, she taught full-time until she and husband Ken Crawford started their family. Gay also taught dancing for many



### Guess Who?

Tom Bonner as Horace Vendergelder didn't stand a chance against Thespians' version of Dolly Levi in the Thespian 75th Anniversary production of Hello Dolly! Who is she? Answer on Page 4.

years, and in her early teaching years at Churchill High School, she directed musicals presented by the faculty to raise scholarship money for high school seniors. Even though Churchill is now part of the Woodland Hills School District, the tradition lives on in the annual Woodland Hills Faculty Follies, now featuring faculty and staff from every school in the district. Once her daughters were in school, Gay began substitute teaching, but only in the buildings her girls were in, so she could be home for them. She still subs at East Allegheny High School near Pittsburgh and loves it. She also taught one semester last year at Penn State McKeesport, but still prefers high school.

And for Gay, music and performance really became a family affair. Her husband Ken, now retired, was a systems engineer specializing in security. He also was, and still is, a bagpiper! He performed as a member of the acclaimed MacDonald Pipe Band of Pittsburgh, and is in demand as a solo piper for weddings, funerals, and any other event in-between.

Their daughters also became involved with music and performance and combined it with their Scottish heritage. Both are violinists and pianists with classical training, and both are award-winning Scottish fiddlers.

Melinda, the eldest, is self-taught in fiddling, and her sister Amanda followed her into it. The girls "stole" their father's bagpipe music and transposed it for fiddle. Last year at the Ligonier Highland Games, Melinda won the

## Calendar

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum ..... Nov. 10 & 11

Fall TAIG ..... Nov. 11

Fall Children's Show ..... TBA  
Quilt ..... March 23 & 24, '01

Spring TAIG ..... March 24, '01

Spring Children's Show ..... TBA

Summer TAIG ..... July 14, '01

Open Class fiddling title, and Amanda, in her first competition, won the Junior Division. Both girls hold the title of Allegheny Mountain Fiddling Champion. As of this writing, Melinda was on her way to New Hampshire to compete in the National Highland Games, a competition entered by invitation only! And at the age of 21, too young to rent a car to drive there, she will likely be one of the younger competitors.

Gay is justifiably proud of her girls. Melinda graduated magna cum laude from Duquesne University and began her first teaching position this year at Calvert County Senior High School in Maryland, where she conducts the orchestra and teaches both fiddle and classical violin. In addition to fiddling, Amanda began Highland Dancing at the age of 8, and has medalled in dance in Virginia, Maryland, Ohio, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania. She is now a freshman at Shenandoah Conservatory in Virginia majoring in Arts Management, a mix of music and business.

So as not to be left out of all this, Gay learned to play the bodhran, a Celtic drum, and she and the girls performed as a family group for about five years on the "nursing home circuit." To quote Gay, "There has always been music in my house."

But now, facing the empty nest experience, Gay and Ken plan to do a good bit of traveling, including a trip to Scotland in the near future to learn even more about this rich heritage. And let the music play on!