Guide to IU South Bend Presbyterian Players Collection

Summary Information

Repository:
Indiana University South Bend Archives  
1700 Mishawaka Avenue P.O. Box 7111  
South Bend, Indiana 46634  
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Creator: Indiana University South Bend

Title: Presbyterian Players Collection

Extent: .50 linear ft.

Abstract:

Often touted as “South Bend’s oldest community theatre,” the Presbyterian Players mounted hundreds of productions over five decades, including familiar plays and popular musicals, as well as the occasional lesser-known work. The group formed in 1945 under the auspices of the First Presbyterian Church of South Bend, Indiana. While some productions took place in venues like the Washington High School Auditorium, the Indiana University South Bend Auditorium, or the Bendix Theatre at the Century Center, the majority of the performances associated with the programs in this collection took place in the Church itself. The First Presbyterian Church has a long history as part of the wider Michiana community. A small group of early South Bend residents came together to form the church in 1834, and as the congregation grew, so too did the structures built to accommodate it. The grandest of these, built in 1889, still stand at the corner of Lafayette and West Washington Streets—though it is no longer the site of the First Presbyterian Church, which has been located on West Colfax Avenue since 1953.

Sisters Mary Pappas (February 7, 1926–June 11, 2012) and Aphrodite Pappas (c. 1923– ), who donated the materials found in this inventory, directed, acted in, or otherwise helped stage numerous performances of the Presbyterian Players. The Pappas sisters’ involvement in local theatre dates to their high school days, when they attended Central High School in South Bend and participated in productions directed by James Lewis Casaday (for more information about Casaday’s life and legacy see the James Lewis Casaday Theatre Collection). Mary would later serve as president and secretary of the Presbyterian Players, as well as co-chair of the group’s 50th anniversary celebration in 1996. The sisters’ love of music also extended beyond the Players: as members of the St. Andrew Greek Orthodox

1 Jay Miller, “Presbyterian Players Reflect on 50 Years,” South Bend Tribune, page C9, August 26, 1996.
2 James Hurley, “First Presbyterian marks 175 years,” South Bend Tribune, November 24, 2009:  
Church, Aphrodite volunteered as Choral Director for 50 years, and Mary sang in the choir. Since moving to South Bend in 1928, members of the Pappas family have been, and continue to be, leaders in the South Bend Greek community.  

Other prominent members of the South Bend community who participated in the Presbyterian Players’ productions include: George Fischoff, composer, pianist, and son of the founder of the Fischoff National Chamber Music Competition; Roger Birdsell, distant relative of South Bend manufacturer John Comly Birdsell; and the aforementioned James Lewis Casaday, a leading figure of the South Bend local theatre scene, to name just a few.

Scope and Content Note:

The collection is arranged into three series: 1) Presbyterian Players programs (21 folders), 2) Scripts belonging to the Pappas sisters (3 folders), and 3) Miscellaneous documents (1 folder).

Series 1. The Presbyterian Players programs range from the 1959-1960 season until the 1995-1996 season. Each program includes information about the play or musical being performed, such as the title, the writer(s) and/or composer(s), the cast and crew, the performance space, and the dates of the production. Many also include notes of thanks to seasonal donors and other supporters, and some include advertisements from local sponsors. The programs often include a list of the current or next season’s scheduled performances; this inventory, however, lists only the programs donated to the St. Joseph County Public Library (later transferred to IUSB’s Franklin D. Schurz Library). In addition, “Social Hall” and “Theatre (or Theater) Wing” are used interchangeably to refer to the performance space of the First Presbyterian Church. In the inventory below, the location (when given) is listed as it was written in the original program.

Series 2. A total of 17 scripts provide a window into the Pappas sisters’ involvement in a vibrant South Bend theatre scene. The scripts frequently include the name of either Aphrodite or Mary Pappas on the cover of a script—perhaps signifying their direction of that particular play, though further research would be needed to determine whether this is the case. The scripts also include handwritten notes concerning staging, costuming, scenery, and/or the dates and location of performances. Most of these are found throughout the script’s text, but in some cases a bound volume contains several sheets of loose paper with additional notes. In one case, a program from and a newspaper clipping about the performance are enclosed with the script. Unfortunately, in most instances, no information is given about when or where a particular play was performed.

Series 3. In addition to the programs and scripts, which make up the bulk of the materials, there are several miscellaneous documents included at the end of the collection. These include 1) four sonnets by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, typed onto four large notecards, the purpose of which is unclear, and 2) a parody song titled “To Production Managers.”

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions:

This collection is open for research.
Advanced notice is required.

Usage Restrictions:

Copyright interests for this collection have been transferred to the Trustees of Indiana University. For more information, contact the Indiana University South Bend Archivist.

Preferred Citation:

[Item]: Presbyterian Players Collection, Indiana University South Bend Archives.

Processing Information:

Processed by Laura Weis in June 2017.

Finding Aid

Box 1 of 1

Series 1: Presbyterian Players Programs, 1960 – 1996
All entries are programs from Presbyterian Players’ productions, unless otherwise noted. They are cited as follows: <Title.> <Writing and/or music credits.> <Director credit.> <Location: Dates.>


Folder 2: 1963 – 1964 Season


**Folder 3: 1964 – 1965 Season**


**Folder 4: 1965 – 1966 Season**


2. *Write me a Murder*. By Frederick Knott. Directed by Irene Pyle Millar. Social Hall, First Presbyterian Church, South Bend, IN: May 18-21, 1966.


**Folder 5: 1966 – 1967 Season**


**Folder 6: 1967 – 1968 Season**


**Folder 7: 1968 – 1969 Season**


**Folder 9: 1971 – 1972 Season**


**Folder 10: 1972 – 1973 Season**


Folder 11: 1973 – 1974 Season


Folder 12: 1974 – 1975 Season


Folder 15: 1979 – 1980 Season
2. Here’s Love. By Meredith Wilson. Directed by Tom Brubaker. Theatre Wing, First Presbyterian Church, South Bend, IN: November 30-December 1, December 7-8, 1979.

1. Players on Broadway. Directed by Roland Kelly. First Presbyterian Church, South Bend, IN: October 17-18, 24-25.

Folder 17: 1982 – 1983 Season

Folder 18: 1983 – 1984 Season


Series 2: Scripts belonging to the Pappas Sisters
Scripts are cited as follows: <Playwright.> <Title.> <Publisher City:> <Publisher,> <Copyright Year(s).> A notation is made if the script contains additional loose materials.

Folder 22: Bound scripts (folder 1 of 2)
   - Includes 20 sheets of paper with handwritten notes about staging and costuming.
   - Contains two copies of a one-page program, which shows the performance was part of the Summer Theatre Education Series, performed at the Central High School Little Theatre from September 6-9, 1960, and directed by James Lewis Casaday. The program also includes a cast and crew list.
   - Contains newspaper clipping, “Cyrano Is Effective Theater,” by Frank G. Schmidt, Music-Drama Writer for the *South Bend Tribune*. Handwritten date of 9/7/60.

Folder 23: Bound scripts (folder 2 of 2)

14. Coward, Noel. *Bittersweet*. *no further publishing information included*

Folder 24: Unbound scripts

17. Caryll, Ivan (music) and C.M.S. McLellan (book and lyrics). Acts II and III of *The Pink Lady*. Undated. **Note:** Act I was not included with the collection.

Series 3: Miscellaneous documents

Folder 25: Miscellaneous Documents

   **Note:** Though the notecards contain no identifying information, the poems are selected sonnets from Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s “Sonnets from the Portuguese.” They are cited below for reference:
   - Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “My letters! All dead paper…” (Sonnet 28)
   - Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “And therefore if to love can be desert…” (Sonnet 11)
   - Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “First time he kissed me, he only but kissed…” (Sonnet 38)
   - Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “How do I love thee? Let me count the ways…” (Sonnet 43)