



Footlights

MARCH 2023

The Players of Utica Newsletter

Glorious! Hits All the Right Comedy Notes

WE'D BE WILLING to bet that you'll never have a better time listening to bad singing than attending this production of *Glorious!*, which opens March 24 at the Players Theatre. It's the amazing true story of Florence Foster Jenkins, who was labeled by her critics as "the worst singer in the world." But the insult never stopped her from pursuing her dream. *Footlights* spoke with director **Art Felshaw** about the witty comedy.

FOOTLIGHTS: Some of our readers might have heard of Florence Foster Jenkins, others might not. Who was she?

ART: Florence Foster Jenkins was a New York socialite in the 1930s and '40s who developed a penchant for singing opera. She spent much of her fortune pursuing this passion, nearly to the point of bankruptcy. Oh yes, and any note she got right was just a matter of luck!

FOOTLIGHTS: What does the play tell about Florence's life and career?

ART: Although her singing career was spread out over many years, the play does a masterful job of condensing these years into just a couple of hours and focuses on her late years when she was around 70, by the time she sang at Carnegie Hall. All of her exploits and the situations within the play are mostly true.

FOOTLIGHTS: She associated with many famous people. How is it, do you think, that she acquired the level of fame that she did, considering her abilities?

ART: The famous and near-famous supported Florence's performances without question. I think it was because Florence was fearless. Going for her dream and not caring a bit about what other people thought. Now, what was said behind her back is anyone's guess. As she says in the show, "I am aware there are those that say I cannot sing, but no one can say I did not sing!"

FOOTLIGHTS: What can you tell us about some of the other characters in the play?

ART: Two of the other main characters, St. Clair and Cosme McMoon, are her support system throughout most of her career.



St. Clair Bayfield was a moderately successful actor in England and came to America in the 1930s. He somehow found Florence and they became close friends, and he began to refer to himself as "the boyfriend," even after they were married. And Cosme McMoon became Florence's accompanist while he was in his mid-20s. Although Cosme's personal life may have made an eyebrow raise, Florence never let on, if she even knew. The character of Dorothy as Florence's best friend seems to be written as many people concentrated into one. This represents all the people who were devoted to her.

FOOTLIGHTS: What do you think audiences will enjoy most about the show?

ART: I think the simple fact that Florence Foster Jenkins was one of a kind and had so much love for her art, she wasn't afraid to put herself smack dab in the middle of high society, bad singing and all. Bringing to life a story that can easily be looked up and researched in photographs and film and still allowing for some poetic license is a challenge all its own. It's kind of a parable for anyone who marches to a different drummer, sees the world from a different angle, and isn't afraid to say, "Nobody can say I didn't!"

The cast includes Denise Morganti, Steve Maggio, Carl DeFranco, Sharon Rankins-Burd, Deborah Martin, and Kaysey Hinkle.

Performances for *Glorious!* are as follows: Fridays, March 24 and 31 at 7:30 p.m.; Saturdays, March 25 and April 1 at 2:00 p.m.; and Sundays, March 26 and April 2 at 2:00 p.m. Please note that Saturday performances are now 2 p.m. matinees. For all tickets, go to our website at <http://www.playersofutica.org/order-tickets> or call 315-724-7624. ☆



Remembering Carl Austin

PLAYERS OF UTICA mourns the passing of our friend and colleague **Carl Austin**. Carl was a regular fixture at Players, having appeared in more than 25 productions over five decades since the 1970s, including *Little Mary Sunshine* (1972), *The Crucible* (1974), *Sweeney Todd* (1981), *Crimes of the Heart* (1984), *Don't Drink the Water* (1987), *The Diary of Anne Frank* (2003), and three different productions of *Our Town* (1971, 1988, 2014). He also was a frequent performer with Players To Go dinner theatre productions.



Carl served on Players' Board of Governors for many years. He was its Secretary from 1978 to 1983 and ably served as its Treasurer from 1984 to 2000 and again from 2009 to 2018. In later years, he was a Players emeritus board member.

"Carl was a man of few words," says friend Jo-Ann Mammone-Mox. "He always gave 110 percent to any task he was charged with. Carl was a good man, a good friend, and no one learned lines quicker than him!"

Even as he battled illness these last few years, Carl could always be counted on as an audience member for our season shows. He will be missed by the local theatre community and all of us at Players of Utica. ☆

Auditions for Video Series

THE HIPSTER DETECTIVE

CREATOR **Mike D. Burke** in collaboration with Players of Utica is developing an original comedy detective video series and will need actors of various ages as well as a film crew.

The Hipster Detective follows the cases of a troubled private investigator, Chester "Chet" Charleston. With his unconventional investigative abilities and friends in low places, he solves unlikely crimes for anyone willing to pay.

Go to the 19 Wolves Studios website for more information: <https://www.19wolvesstudios.com/tv-shows>. ☆

Mural More Brilliant Than Ever



AS YOU DRIVE down State Street in Utica, you can't help but notice the grand and colorful mural on the north-facing wall of the Players Theatre building. And now, even after sunset, the mural brilliantly and beautifully comes to life thanks to the installation of a set of lights to illuminate the tribute to Utica's downtown theatres past and present.

The large 30-foot by 50-foot mural was conceived by **Lynne Mishalanie** and designed and painted by artist Maria Vallese of Retro-Sorrento. An official dedication event was held on October 26, 2022.

The new lights were sponsored by Rust2Green Utica and installed by Boscar Electric. The Rust2Green organization (www.rust2greenutica.org) has the mission of "mobilizing change through community-driven placemaking and by people uniting, working and acting together to create a greener, healthier, more equitable and vibrant city and region."

Players is grateful for this outstanding contribution to our city, neighborhood, and the visibility it is bringing to theatre and the arts. ☆

PLAYERS OF UTICA

2022–2023 Season

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Players of Utica
1108 State St., Utica
315-724-7624

Coming to Players in June

Girl Singer... A Tribute

THIS ORIGINAL PRODUCTION is a buoyant musical showcasing hit songs associated with many of the most popular female vocalists of all time and electrified on the stage by some of the most talented performers in the area. It's a captivating and surefire musical entertainment you will not want to miss!

Directed by Daniel Fusillo

Music arranged and directed by John Krause

Show dates: June 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 2023



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How To Buy Your Tickets

Seating is limited. Advance ticket purchase is highly recommended as many of our shows sell out early.

INDIVIDUAL TICKET PRICES:

- \$20.00 regular admission
- \$18.00 senior admission
- \$12.00 student admission (valid ID required).

See website for group ticket sales.

BY INTERNET (PREFERRED):

ThunderTix offers a fast, easy, and affordable way to buy your tickets 24/7 with your credit card. Go to: <http://playersofutica.org/order-tickets>



BY PHONE:

Tickets and reservations, call: 315-724-7624. Approximate hours: M-F, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Performance day hours: 10:00 a.m. – 30 minutes prior to curtain time.

AT THE DOOR:

Tickets might be available at the door the night of any performance.

Many of our performances have limited seating and are sold out. We will do our best to seat you if you arrive the

We'll have your information at the box office when you come to the theatre.

night of the performance. Membership Subscribers will receive priority over non-Members. ☆