1982

History of Theatre and Theatre Curriculum at Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho, Through 1981

John Thomas Bidwell
Brigham Young University - Provo

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HISTORY OF THEATRE AND THEATRE CURRICULUM
AT RICKS COLLEGE, REXBURG, IDAHO,
THROUGH 1981

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of Theatre and Cinematic Arts
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
John Thomas Bidwell
August 1982
This Thesis, by John Thomas Bidwell, is accepted in its present form by the Department of Theatre and Cinematic arts of Brigham Young University as satisfying the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

Max C. Golightly, Committee Chairman

Charles L. Metten, Committee Member

Charles A. Henson, Committee Member

22 April 1982

Date

Robert A. Nelson, Graduate Coordinator
DEDICATION

To J. Lynn Benson,
director, teacher, counselor, and friend
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I wish to express my deepest regard and love to my best friend and wife Trudy, whose help, constant love, and encouragement have made this thesis possible. And last, but not least, my own dear parents, Mr. and Mrs. George H. Bidwell, and my wife's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Harold K. Nielsen, are to be thanked with loving gratitude for support and faith in this project.
INTRODUCTION

The author's intent for writing the history of theatre at Ricks College has been to reveal this institution's contribution to theatre and theatre education in Southeastern Idaho. Whenever available, data collected will attempt to provide concise information concerning plays performed, their authors, the directors, performance dates, and performance locations. This information will distinctly trace the growth of a junior college theatre program, its faculty and productions.

The reader will sense the rich heritage and tradition that have become a part of theatre at Ricks College, as it has nurtured itself from infancy to maturity through nearly a century of development.

This treatise will concentrate only on theatre at Ricks College. Theatre in the community will not be examined, nor will Ricks College's theatre program be compared with the community's theatre, nor theatre at any other institution.

Ricks College is owned and operated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To assist the reader in understanding vocabulary used in the text that is unique to this Church, the following definition of terms is included.
DEFINITION OF TERMS

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: was organized in 1830 by Joseph Smith. Members believe Smith was acting under direct revelation from heavenly messengers who instructed him to restore the original Church of Jesus Christ on earth in the latter days. All references to the 'Church' apply to this organization unless specifically stated otherwise. Additional names by which this Church is known are: Mormon, LDS, and Latter-day Saint.

Prophet: An individual leader of the Church who receives revelation from God to direct the affairs of the Church, serves as President of the Church as well.

President: The Prophet and central leader for the Church.

First Presidency: Leading body for the Church, composed of the President-Prophet, and two counselors.

Apostle: One of twelve men chosen as part of a quorum. This body of men constitutes the second in command of the Church's authority.

Ward: A congregation in the Church, as well as a specific geographical area within a given boundary.

Stake: A larger congregation made up of several wards. The boundaries including all individual wards become the boundaries for the stake.

Stake President: One individual charged with supervision of the stake.

Stake Presidency: Leading body of men for an individual stake, composed of the President and two counselors.

Bishop: Appointed leader of a ward, similar to a pastor or priest.

Bishopric: Leading body of men for the ward, composed of the Bishop and two counselors.

Stake Conference: The meeting together of all the wards within a given stake, at one given time.

General Conference: The meeting of Church leaders throughout the world at Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah.

M.I.A.: Stands for the Mutual Improvement Association, auxiliary organization in the Church for young adults.
This thesis contains an introduction, ten chapters, a conclusion and an appendix. The first chapter is a brief history of Ricks College. Chapters II and III contain information concerning the years of transition at Ricks as it evolved from an elementary school to a college institution. Chapters IV through X are titled after the instructor or department chairman who served during the years included in each chapter. There are three exceptions made in the scheme of chapter naming: One, Myrtle Henderson's first year at Ricks College is included in Chapter II entitled "Transition Years;" two, Harry Plummer, who served as theatre instructor while Joseph Catmull went on leave, is included in Chapter V entitled "Joseph Catmull;" and three, Kay Wilkins, who served as Department Chairman for one year, is included in Chapter X entitled "Robert W. Nelson." The Conclusion will note specific events that shaped the Ricks College Department of Theatre Arts as it stands at the present. The Appendix contains a list of plays, authors, and directors, in chronological order.

Principal sources employed in the compilation of this work have been personal interviews with people associated with theatre at Ricks, Ricks College yearbooks, Ricks College newspapers and publications, Southeastern Idaho newspapers, and scrapbooks kept for the college presidents.
CHAPTER I

A BRIEF HISTORY OF

RICKS COLLEGE

On 8 June 1888, the General Board of Education of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sent out circulars to all the stake presidents in the Church encouraging them to begin efforts to establish academies within the boundaries of their stakes. The stakes were to establish local boards of education that would in turn report to the General Board in Salt Lake City.¹

The presidency of the Bannock Stake proceeded to lay the matter before the members of the priesthood at its next scheduled stake conference held on 17 August 1888.² The membership accepted the challenge and the following men were sustained as members of the Bannock Stake Board of Education:

President of the Board was Thomas E. Ricks, and other members were James E. Pogg, Rexburg; Jacob Spori, Rexburg; Bishop John Donaldson, Teton; Bishop W. M. Parker, Parker; Bishop Richard Jardine, Lewisville [later spelled Lewisville]; and James E. Steel, Iona.³

Moving into swift action the board went to work finding funds to open an academy. As a result of their efforts, the Bannock Academy officially opened its doors on 12 November 1888, with fifty-nine students enrolled.

The Bannock Academy was first housed in the Rexburg Chapel, in Rexburg, Idaho. The log meeting house was built in the shape of a "T".⁵
The Bannock Academy, later to become Ricks college, was designed to provide education for children of grade-school age in both secular and spiritual matters. With times being economically difficult, the school was forced to release its first principal, Jacob Spori, during the winter term of its first year. He returned the following fall and served another two years as principal. At the end of that third year he resigned, feeling the need to put his own financial house in order.

The next principal appointed was Charles N. Watkins, who came to the school in August of 1891. Watkins remained until the summer of 1849, when his health required him to resign. The depression of 1893 was taking its toll at the Academy as well, with salaries being cut by a third.

George Cole became the third principal of Bannock Academy in the Fall of 1894 and was immediately faced with the financial troubles of the past five years. There was real concern by the board of education as to whether or not they feasibly could keep the school open. To answer the financial questions at hand, John Donaldson, a member of the board, proposed that he and several other stake members be assessed sufficient amounts to take care of the current deficit of $886.89.

Intermediate grades were added to the curriculum in 1895, under George Cole's administration. With the addition of the seventh and eighth grade subjects the enrollment climbed to one hundred and eighteen students. Even with this increase, financial problems loomed over the Academy. Teachers were signing contracts that would provide them with necessary produce to live, as there was no money available. To
complicate matters, the Bannock Stake was divided, forming the Bingham Stake and leaving what was left of the Bannock Stake the major responsibility for supporting the school.\textsuperscript{12}

Douglas M. Todd became the school's next principal in 1899.\textsuperscript{13} Todd served the institution for two years, and his goal was to see the Academy become completely a secondary school. All lower work, except a preparatory course, and the 7th and 8th grades, had been eliminated under George Cole, and Todd's desire was to see these courses also eliminated from the curriculum.\textsuperscript{14}

During the late 1890s, public grade schools were springing up in most Idaho communities. This presented yet another problem to the Academy, as parents felt that they were paying for the public schools and could no longer afford to send their children to the private Academy. The school was only able to continue because high school courses were added to the curriculum.

As principally a secondary school, the Academy was moved from the Rexburg Chapel to the Z.C.M.I. building on the corner of Main and Second East in 1899.\textsuperscript{15}

The Bannock Stake was again divided on 6 August 1898, resulting in the area of Rexburg being named Fremont Stake. Correspondingly, the name of Bannock Academy was changed to Fremont Academy.\textsuperscript{16}

Ezra C. Christensen, who later had his name legally changed to Ezra Dalby, became the next principal of the Academy in 1891.\textsuperscript{17} He served as head of the institution until 1914. In 1902 a move was on to rename the Academy Smith Academy after the visit of Apostle John H. Smith to the general conference in that area. Before that action was taken, the stake presidency received a letter from the First Presidency, suggesting the Academy be named after Thomas E. Ricks, the first
president of the Bannock Stake School Board. The suggestion was voted on by the Fremont Stake Presidency, and the school was renamed Ricks Academy.\textsuperscript{18}

On 25 September 1899, ground breaking ceremonies were held on the site of the new Ricks Academy Building that was to be built.\textsuperscript{19} The large three story edifice was completed and dedicated on 12 November 1906.\textsuperscript{20} It was exactly eighteen years to the day since the Academy first opened its doors and the first time the school was operating in the black instead of the red.\textsuperscript{21}

The school continued to add secondary courses to the curriculum, allowing the Academy to offer several departmental certificates of graduation. The courses available during the 1908-1909 school year were:

- A four year Normal
- A four year General High School
- A three year Commercial
- A three year Domestic Arts
- A three year Mechanic Arts
- A one year Sunday School Normal Course
- A one year Preparatory
- A Missionary Course
- A Winter Course
- Special courses are offered in the following: Elocution, Music, Cooking, Sewing, Art, and Carpentry.\textsuperscript{22}

Though under the administration of Ezra Dalby the school grew and progressed rapidly, the board of education released him from his duties as principal and teacher in 1914.\textsuperscript{23} It seems that in an effort to stimulate thinking in his classes, Dalby had discussed the theories of Charles Darwin. This did not set well with the community and school board. Dalby and ten members of his faculty were released at the end of the school year in 1914.\textsuperscript{24}
The next principal, A. B. Christensen, was hired from the faculty of Brigham Young University in 1914. Christensen began his assignment with two ideas in mind: First, to begin junior college work at Ricks; and second, to build a social and recreation building.

The increasing prevalence of public high schools in the area was probably the greatest reason for Christensen's desire to bring the school to junior college status. With more and more students attending the public schools, the Academy would have closed had the move to junior college courses not been made. During his second year, several new college courses were added to the curriculum, providing an opportunity for area high school graduates to continue their schooling. Christensen also set to work beautifying the campus that up to this time had been ten acres of undeveloped sagebrush.

Construction of the social and recreational building was completed in 1919 at a cost of $75,000. It was very similar to the original building in appearance and was dedicated by Apostle George Albert Smith.

In 1917 George Romney became Ricks College's seventh principal. With outbreak of World War I, the few men who remained in this country were needed desperately in agriculture to help provide food for the war effort. Romney organized a year-round quarter system at the Academy so that both men and women could help farmers in the spring and fall—the busiest seasons in agriculture—and then attend school during winter and summer. With the end of World War I, the Academy returned to a nine-month tri-semester system.
During the 1917-1918 school year the official name of the institution was changed from Ricks College to Ricks Normal College, and the title of principal was changed to president.  

During the 1920s, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints began evaluating its existing academies throughout the mountain west. It was determined that a majority of the institutions would be closed because they were not financially self-supporting. Those academies that were earmarked to survive were making, or had made, the step to junior college status.

In 1923 the name Ricks Normal College was changed to Ricks College—the name the institution has been known by ever since.

In 1926 the State of Idaho Board of Education was prescribing rules and regulations for the training of teachers. Ricks College soon certified as a teacher's college, and high schools throughout the state were recruiting its graduates as teachers; Ricks College was now participating in debate, football, basketball, track, and baseball.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints began a movement in 1928 to eliminate all junior colleges it owned. For the next ten years the administrators and local school board would try to persuade the State of Idaho to assume ownership of the school. Time after time the Church would give ultimatums that they could no longer support the school, while time after time the Idaho Legislators would reject the college as a gift. In the midst of the great depression, the state looked upon the school as a burden and not an asset to the tax payers of Idaho. After ten years of trying to give the college to the state, the Church changed its mind; it appeared Ricks College would remain a part of the Church Educational System.
During most of this traumatic decade, Ricks was under the leadership of Hyrum Manwaring. Once it was determined that Ricks College was going to stay, President Manwaring set about making physical improvements to the campus, with the major project being the purchase and remodeling of residence halls for student housing.\textsuperscript{36}

In 1938 there was a transfer of power from the local board of education to the General Board of Education of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City.\textsuperscript{37} Ricks College was no longer a community institution but owned outright and operated by the Church. Even after taking this action the Church was still making offers to the State of Idaho to assume ownership. The Church’s desire to rid itself of the school was the major reason for Ricks’ somewhat slow growth during the current thirty-year period, from the late 1930s to the early 1960s.

John L. Clarke became President of Ricks College in 1944, as the country was involved heavily in World War II.\textsuperscript{38}

The Second World War took a much bigger toll of the college than did World War I. Enrollment dropped by two-thirds. Many of the inter-scholastic competitions were dropped, and men were so scarce that the college elected its first and only female student body president in 1941.\textsuperscript{39}

With the end of World War II, all colleges in the nation were suddenly besieged with a tremendous influx of servicemen going to school on the G.I. Bill. With the help of the Federal Housing Authority, Ricks College added forty-two married housing units in 1946.\textsuperscript{40}

The Idaho Legislature added requirements for teachers effective in 1955, insisting that they have at least four years of college. To
keep pace with this demand, Ricks College added a third year to its curriculum in 1948, and in 1949 became a four-year school. There were originally six divisions when Ricks gained its four-year status: Education, Farm and Home Science, Religion, Social Science, and Business. By December of 1951 Ricks College was accredited by the Northwest Accrediting Association of Secondary and Higher Schools.\(^{41}\)

It appeared that the college was here to stay, and a large-scale plan was proposed for the growth of the physical plant. This plan was not to be implemented, for in 1954 the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints announced that Ricks must return to junior college status by 1956. This announcement came as a shock to all who were associated with the college, for there had been no hint of such action.\(^{42}\)

Soon after the announcement of status reduction, Ricks College was dealt another blow. An announcement from Salt Lake City said Ricks College would be moved from Rexburg to Idaho Falls. The move would never take place, as the people of Rexburg began a five-year struggle with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to retain the college in Rexburg. Many of the faculty members left Ricks College during this time, feeling their futures were unsure. In April of 1961, after months of debate over the College's move, an Associated Press bulletin was broadcast over the local radio station that elated the citizens of Rexburg.

The First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints announced today it intends to construct three new buildings at Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho.\(^{43}\)

The President of the Church then visited the campus in September of 1961; President John Clarke recalled David O. McKay's visit.
President McKay came into my office again on the second floor of the Spori building, sat down and gave me one of the greatest thrills of my life when he proceeded to describe the Snake River Valley and how he had driven up through it in the beautiful morning. He talked especially about Pocatello north and named all the towns as he came up through the valley. He then said he came through Rigby and then he came to Rexburg, the home of Ricks College. Then he went on to say that he felt better than he had ever felt before that the decision to leave Ricks College in Rexburg was right—that this was the home of Ricks College.

Now at least Ricks College could move ahead and grow at a rate befitting the institution it was meant to be.

The nursing program begun in 1957 survived the location debate and has become an integral part of Ricks' curriculum. By 1975, five hundred and thirty-two registered nurses had graduated through the program.

The 1960s proved to be much less distressing than the previous years in the College's history. In 1961 a proposed building program was released to the public that included: a science center, a fine arts center, a library and central heating plant, a field house, an agricultural and technical education building, a family life and nursing building, additional residence halls, various academic buildings, a student center, a physical plant building; and special housing for married students.

John L. Clarke retired after twenty-seven years of service in July 1971. Dr. Henry B. Eyring, then of the Graduate School of Business at Stanford University, was named as his successor. In The Ensign published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints President Eyring said:

*We are a place where there are many two-year programs that are career-oriented. We are continuing to develop these programs. More and more, I think Ricks College will add to its two-year college*
studies and programs the additional kinds of courses where a young person may come and obtain the skills he needs and then depart into a profession.\textsuperscript{49}

President Bruce Hafen became the eleventh President of Ricks College in 1978, the position he holds today. The campus has grown physically to accommodate a student body of more than six thousand. The newest addition to the campus is the Eliza R. Snow Center for the Performing Arts, which is one of two buildings on campus that house the college's theatrical events. It is at this point in the history of Ricks College, that the History of Theatre and Theatre Curriculum at Ricks College Through 1981 begins.
NOTES

2Ibid., p. 19.
3Ibid., p. 23.
5Ibid., p. 25.
6Ibid., p. 39.
7Ibid., p. 45.
8Ibid., p. 44.
9Ibid., p. 46.
10Ibid.
11Ibid., p. 47.
12Ibid., p. 53.
13Ibid.
14Ibid., p. 54.
15Ibid., p. 52.
16Ibid., p. 53.
17Ibid., p. 59–60.
18Ibid., p. 62.
19Ibid., p. 66–67.
20Ibid., p. 70.
21Ibid.

22Rexburg (Idaho) Current-Journal, 6 September 1908.

24Ibid., p. 74-75.

25Ibid., p. 81.

26Ibid., p. 82.

27Ibid., p. 86-88.

28Ibid., p. 88-89.

29Ibid.

30Ibid., p. 92.

31Ibid., p. 93.

32Ibid., p. 97-106.

33Ibid., p. 108.

34Ibid.

35Ibid., p. 113-152.

36Ibid., p. 134.

37Ibid., p. 154.

38Ibid., p. 162.

39Ibid., p. 158.

40Ibid., p. 167.

41Ibid., p. 167-176.

42Ibid., p. 178.

43Ibid., p. 244.

44Ibid., p. 246.


48 Ibid.

49 Ibid., p. 280.
CHAPTER II

THE SECONDARY YEARS

1904 - 1905

As the Academy began its seventeenth year of educating the young people of the upper Snake River Valley, students and faculty were looking forward to the graduation of the first four-year high school class in the spring of 1908. Theatre was receiving stimulation and growth from Retta Snow, the faculty member charged with teaching the elocution class. This class was the forerunner of the drama and theatre classes that would eventually find their place in Ricks College's curriculum. Oscar Kirkham, the school's music director, was also aiding the growth of theatre at the Academy, with the production of operettas and operas. From the twenty-third of March Current-Journal, a new local Rexburg newspaper initiated in January of 1905, we read:

A week from Friday the Academy choir will put on an operetta, "Phyllis, the Farmer's Daughter." This has been in course of preparation for some time, and much diligent work has been put on it by Prof. Kirkham and his choir members in practicing up choruses, solo parts, etc. We feel confident that the public will appreciate the rendition as a rare treat.¹

On February 14, 1905, the Academy engaged the services of Professor S. H. Clark of Chicago University. He was hailed as, "the Greatest Dramatic Interpreter in America."² He was coming as a special guest artist for the Academy's Exhibition Day. This was a day set aside for the community to visit the campus and view the work that was going on there.
It was a bitter disappointment that Prof. Clark was not able to appear on account of being snowbound at Denver. This was made up for by the presentation of an excellent, though hastily arranged, free entertainment instead. The numbers were of the very highest order throughout, and were as follows:

Selections on the phonograph given by Joseph Farnsworth; selection by the big four quartette who responded to a hearty encore; selections by Miss Retta Snow, who responded twice to encores; a duet by Misses Mada Call and May Fisher; an imitation of a preacher giving a funeral sermon over a friend by the inimitable Joe Adams, who responding three times to rousing encores, giving imitations of a cornet solo, tuning a violin, and a female singer; another recitation by Miss Snow, who responded with a piece given in a gypsy costume; a recitation given by Prin. Christiansen, who also responded to a hearty encore; a solo by John Wilson, which was heartily appreciated. The whole was closed by a little comedy given by the normals, entitled, "Who Shall Win Him?"

Retta Snow must have been well schooled in the field of drama to extemporaneously provide four different selections for the evening's entertainment when Professor Clark was unable to attend.

The Ricks Academy Building (Fig. 1), a three-story rock structure, contained an auditorium on the top floor where plays and operettas were performed (Fig. 2).

1905 - 1906

In November of 1905 Mrs. Kunz-Baker visited the campus. This professional entertainer was well received by the community and Academy audience.

Every feature of the reading by Mrs. Kunz-Baker at the Academy Saturday evening, deserves its word of praise. Not only does the distinguished visitor's commendatory comment, but does also the splendid audience and its generous recognition of the evening's program. Appreciation due, as well, to the faculty of this Academy for their efforts in furnishing an entertainment of so high a grade.

Mrs. Kunz-Baker's text for the evening was Edmond Rostand's Cyrano de Bergerac.
Fig. 1. Jacob Spori Building, first on Ricks campus.

Fig. 2. Auditorium, third floor Jacob Spori Building.
Many faculty members became involved with dramatics and participated in several productions throughout the early years. In January of 1906 a traveling professional company came to town performing the very play the faculty had performed a few weeks earlier.

Della Pringle's Dramatic co. presented, Monday night at Flamm's Hall, "Kentucky," the same play that was given by the faculty at the academy on the evening of Founder's Day last month.5

The Academy Dramatic Company is first made reference to in the 22 February 1906 issue of the Current-Journal. The name itself attests that drama activities were indeed happening on campus.

The Academy Dramatic Company will present the "Southern Rose" at Parker Saturday evening Feb. 24.

... The choir under the direction of Prof. Kirkham is making every effort to have the opera "Heroes of '76," in good shape for presentation tonight. The reputation of the choir is a guarantee that it will be an excellent entertainment. Moreover, it is appropriate to the occasion. Washington's birthday.6

1906 - 1907

Lelia M. Hogan became the new elocution instructor in 1906 replacing Retta Snow. There is not any data available concerning Lelia Hogan's direct influence on productions at the Academy, but it is reasonable to assume that by virtue of her teaching assignment she would have aided those involved with performances.

As members of the community had given support to the Academy for the past nineteen years, it would be only fitting that the Academy would help the town, and so they did in January of 1907.

"My Wife's First Husband" is a comedy that will be given in Flamm's Hall Saturday evening by members of the Academy and others, for the benefit of the First Ward meetinghouse.7

The senior class presented a play in March of 1907, but there is no other information available concerning it.
Oscar Kirkham, the music teacher, was replaced by Chas. J. Engar who directed the operetta, The Merry Milk Maids.

Wednesday, May 15th, The Musical Department will present the Beautiful Operetta, "The Merry Milk Maids," under the direction of Prof. Chas. J. Engar, assisted by Miss Nell Child, Vocalist, and Tillie Flamm, Pianist. . . . Come and see the Jolly Milkmaids and the Rollicking Farmer Boys. Imported costumes. Proceeds for Benefit of Academy Library and Lecture Course. Doors open at 7:30—Curtain Raises at 9. Reserved Seats 50 cents. Tickets on sale at Rexburg Drug Store.8

The operetta traveled to several surrounding communities and was well attended and appreciated.

1907 - 1908

This would prove to be the most active theatrical year yet in the Academy's history. Harold Goff was the new instructor of elocution and was involved not only in the production of plays, but their performance as well.

The first play of the season, or more correctly, the first opera, was performed in November of 1905.

The long expected opera "Belshazzar" was presented at the Ricks Academy Auditorium on Tuesday evening of this week. There were upwards of one thousand people present, which filled the large hall to overflowing, and all who were present feel fully paid and considerable wiser for having seen the old historical story so beautifully placed before the people with strains of sweet harmony and song. There were almost sixty performers in the cast and each elaborately costumed to fit his character.

The accompaniment was played by the Rexburg Concert Orchestra consisting of sixteen pieces and was handled in a manner that was a credit to them.

The play opened up with a scene of Jewish captivity with beautiful chorus and solo work to suit the occasion.

John M. Wilson as Belshazzar, captivated the audience by his low, clear basso voice and his acting was certainly commendable.

Zerubabbel was impersonated in James H. Wallis who was entirely equal to the part he took.

Joseph Adams as Daniel ninety years of age, did some admirable acting, and his voice rang out clear and distinct.

Leo Jacobs as Cyrus, King of Persia, for one with limited experience at stage work did very excellent both in his acting and rendition of his choice solo work.
John Phillips, as Festus, was entirely equal to his part and a much heavier one could have well been carried by him as he had but little solo work to do.

Cecil Clements, as a Babylonian captain, did some very neat and pretty work. He wore the determined look of a knight of old and seemed to mean all he was doing.

P. W. Bernston and G. W. McNeil as generals of the Cyrean army, each clad in a full coat of mail were fully equal to their task while W. H. Thompson, as executioner, with his miniature hatchet carried the dead of black caps to the audience.

Mrs. Mary Winter as Nitocris, Belshazzar's mother, did very excellent work, especially on the high soprano parts in which the execution could be done only by constant training. Her voice rang out sweet and clear.

Lulu Ormsby as Antonia, wife of Belshazzar, acted well her part and sang her music in a very pleasant voice.

Cora Hanson as Shefermin, wife of Zerubabel, in her usual free and clear contralto was very pleasing to the audience as her support to the play was of great strength.

Special notice should be made of the work done by Little Afton Hyde whose sweet, small voice was so clear and distinct as to captivate her listeners.

Mrs. Edna Langton, as a Jewish princess did some very sweet soprano work, notwithstanding her delicate condition. She had been very ill all day.

Belle George, as the angel messenger to King Cyrus, sang in her usual sweet voice and presented a very pretty picture as she sang under the flashlight.

Myrtle Hyde, as Tamar, lady of Belshazzar's court, sang in sweet, pure tones and kept perfect melody throughout, together with some very graceful acting.

Eva Dewsnup as Zerlina, lady of Belshazzar's court, sustained well her part. Her acting was graceful and her voice soft and sweet.

In the duet, trio, quartet and chorus work the whole company deserves congratulations as perfect harmony was sustained.

The acting of the entire company was, with but few exceptions, very commendable.

The electrical effects were good and especially that of the handwriting on the wall, where in the words "Mene Mene Tekel Peres" appeared in a deep crimson color a letter at a time and in tempo to the dirge played by the orchestra.

In a word, the play was what one might expect to see in larger cities and was far above the average of anything that comes to this part of the country, and considerable credit is due Dr. Hyde and those who have assisted him as well as Mr. Engar who so ably conducted the orchestra.

That rather lengthy review was the first of its kind to appear in the local paper and was page one news of the day.
In February of 1908 the Academy had a small fire in the attic and roof of the building, just above the auditorium. With quick action on the part of a faculty member the fire was spotted and help called for in time to prevent severe damage. In all the commotion, however, there was some unnecessary damage done.

As usual there were excitable people who were in the way and did damage. Quite a number of opera seats in the auditorium were broken in an effort to tear them out. Besides ruining them the same people blockaded the stairway with them, and for a time made it impossible to pass water up.\(^\text{10}\)

The principal of the school, Ezra Dalby, contributed to building the drama program at the Academy by performing a dramatic recital of Herod the Great, that was well received and enjoyed by those present in March of 1908.\(^\text{11}\)

Harold Goff directed the staging and Chas. J. Engar the music for the operetta, The Bells of Corneville, that was presented in March of 1908.

The Bells of Corneville, or Chimes of Normandy, was presented by the Academy choir before a large and appreciative audience last Friday night. It was a splendid production and met every expectation of the audience.

... Prof. Engar, under whose direction this choir of young singers has been trained, and who is also director of the orchestra, did himself proud in the public estimation, and unstinted praise is due him for talent and perseverance. The staging was excellent for which Prof. Goff is deserving great praise. ... Harold Goff, as the Marquis of Corneville, took an excellent part and was the favorite with the audience. ... Some humor was developed in having Oscar Steele promenade across the stage as a country girl, and H.H. Hale as a man of the world with an air of having important opinions on most subjects.\(^\text{12}\)

In April of 1908 the seniors presented Jezebel. This was one of several projects by the class to earn money for a class gift to the school.\(^\text{13}\)

In May the seniors followed with another play entitled, The Iron Hand.
The seniors presented the play "The Iron Hand" on Wednesday morning. The parts were taken in a very creditable manner. This class will leave as a momento, "The Historian's History of the World." This set of books will cost about $75 and will be a very valuable addition to the library. 

It appeared the best way for a group to earn money was to produce a play and charge admission.

"The Squire's Daughter," an entertaining three-act comedy drama, was presented very successfully last night [May 14] at the Academy by the first year normal class. The students did surprisingly well and were heartily cheered by the large audience present. The stage settings, make up, and general representation of the characters were much above the ordinary amateur, and much credit for this is due to Instructor Harold Goff, who had charge of their training. The students who took part are Spencer Little, Caddie White, Hazel Lloyd, David Young, Elmer Johnson, Effie Evans, Lynne Driggs, and Horace Hodge.

The receipts netted over $50, which will be applied toward the erection of the front gate that this class has undertaken. The students are very enthusiastic over this undertaking, and by the time school is out will have raised $100 toward it. Arthur Porter, Jr., is the class teacher and has directed them in the work.

The final performance for the 1908 school year took place during the final commencement week. It was a farce with eight characters entitled A Quiet Family. This year was anything but 'quiet' as far as drama was concerned.

1908 - 1909

This was the first year that the Student Rays, a school bulletin-newspaper, took on the qualities of a yearbook. The Student Rays was under the supervision of D. W. Cummings, who was also responsible for the elocution class. Mr. Cummings contributed a great deal to the development of theatre at the school, as well as the record-keeping of those events.

Hyrum Manwaring states in his original history of Ricks College the following:
Each class in the high school departments will be permitted to prepare and render one drama during the school year. The proceeds to be spent as the members of the class may decide.¹⁷

The first play of the season was presented in November by the senior class. This has been the banner year for Dramatics in the Ricks Academy. Such a statement has been made possible because of the excellent dramatic talent in the faculty and the earnest efforts of the students. The season was opened Nov. 9, by a production of the three-act comedy, "The Little Savage," by the Senior Class. It was a fair index to what the students could accomplish under disadvantages. Though the play was lacking to some degree in artistic finish, it was nevertheless thoroughly appreciated by a large audience.¹⁸

The faculty presented a play on 13 November 1980, for the Founders' Day Celebration, entitled Charity Ball. The play, by Elizabeth Montague Birdsall, also performed a second time two weeks later in Sugar City, a small town three miles north of Rexburg.¹⁹

The sophomore class presented a farce in two acts at the Academy on 9 December, but the title of that production is not available in the data, though several names are provided as being participants.²⁰

In January of 1909, the commercial class produced a farce called A Box of Monkeys. The commercial class finally gave their program, and it was perhaps the best class program given thus far during the year.²¹

"Our Boys" was put on the Boards April 2, by the Sophomores. The setting was in England, and the "Boys" were the son of Sir Jeffrey and the son of a successful tradesman, having equal opportunities for education and travel. The interesting plot was greatly enhanced by the characterization of several of the actors. When we take into consideration that the play was put on by second year people, we heartily acknowledge that it was very good and deserving of the highest commendation.

It might be mentioned here that Mr. Cummings has done almost solely the coaching for these plays. His efficient work and interest in them have shown plainly where much of the phenomenal success is due.²²
It often is the case when a good man is found for the job it is
difficult to keep him. D. W. Cummings would leave the next year to
serve a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

_Sylvia_, an opera written by Rhys-Herbert, would be the final
production of the year directed by Professor Engar and performed on 11
May 1909.23

1909 - 1910

Edythe Erickson replaced D. W. Cummings as the instructor of
elocution, and the Hyrum Manwaring script gives at least one specific
duty of the teacher.

A dramatic organization will be effected during the year under the
auspices of the Elocution class. They will carefully study and
render at least one play during the year.24

The seniors presented a class play, _Philopena_, in December, with
the comments in the paper being limited in volume and scope. Perhaps
these individual class productions, with their competition quality
between the grade levels, produced more desire to perform well than did
the elocution teaching.25

The Sophomore class will present, "In The Little Big Horn," a
western drama next Tuesday night, Feb. 8, in the Academy auditorium.
The play is a good one and the class has expended much time and
energy in preparing it. The proceeds will go to help defray the
expenses in erecting the east gate. Everybody is invited to attend
for the cause is a good one, and your money's worth is assured.26

The sophomore play was presented again within the month in con-
junction with the music department's opera written by Maud Elizabeth
Inch and William Rhys-Herbert entitled, _Nautical Knot_. The production
was under the direction of Professor Engar, assisted by Eunice Jacobson
and Miss Martin. Belle George handled the scenery and costumes for the
show.27
The last production of record for the year was performed in March of 1910 by the junior class. Because I Love You, translated and edited by Virginia and Frank Vernon, was well attended and praised.

1910 - 1911

In December of 1910 there was a double feature offered for the season's opening night. There are two accounts of the evening, one from the Student Rays and another from the Current-Journal. Both sources name the first play, Belshazzar's Doom, but the title of the second play is titled differently in the two sources. These particular plays are the first to be directed by a guest director. From the Current-Journal we read the following:

The spectacular production of "Belshazzar's Doom" and the interesting psychological play, "In the Bishop's Carriage," were presented with success at the Ricks Academy Friday and Saturday nights. The auditorium was completely filled Friday night and the audience enjoyed the entire performance.

"Belshazzar's Doom" is a spectacular reproduction of Belshazzar's feast and fall taken from the book of Daniel. The dancing by 30 girls and the hornpipe by the boys were splendid numbers. The fall of the entire company was remarkable for suddenness and accuracy. The costuming was gorgeous and added interest to the affair.

The students were trained by Miss Ienora Shaw in the short space of two weeks to give this performance and without materially interfering with their regular work. Each day she met the student body in the auditorium to have a special course in interpretation and instruction in the development of the body and mind. Those who took part in the play received special training which proved very effective in getting up the big production with excellent results in so short a time.

Students and teachers will remember Miss Shaw's visit and profit by many useful ideas and suggestions given that will be useful in mental growth.

The Student Rays newspaper-yearbook called the second play, Lawyer and the Client. It is just to assume that the Student Rays would probably possess the more precise information, being written and produced by the Academy itself.
The junior class next presented its play, The Tramp, 11 February 1911, in the Flamm Opera House, located downtown in Rexburg. The Opera house was a legitimate theatre facility where traveling troupes would perform. Though performance in Flamm's Opera House was unique at the time, within two years most of the productions would take place there, because the auditorium at the Academy would be remodeled for other academic usage. The juniors were using the income of the play to pay for the class gift, a stone gate at the Northwest entrance of the campus.

The freshman class repeated a play performed by the commercial class two years earlier, A Box of Monkeys, in March of 1911.

The elocution instructor for this year was Amy J. Lee, and a new music teacher, W. King Driggs, became the first professor in residence to have his own dramatic work performed.

The presentation of Prof. W. King Driggs' opera, "The Navajo Princess," by the Academy choir Saturday night was a great treat. Long before the time every seat in the opera house had been sold, and none in the big audience were dissatisfied. Everybody's expression here is that it is the best musical play ever attempted in the city.

Prof. Driggs, the author of the piece and director of the presentation has been the recipient of the most flattering compliments from all who attended. Aside from the special genius as a composer, the presentation showed conscientious and thorough work in training the company, staging, etc., and must have required long and patient hours of effort.

The staging was magnificent, far above anything previously attempted here in the same line.

The costuming, which was under the direction of Mrs. King Driggs and Mrs. Ormsby, was exceptionally good and contributed greatly to the general success.

The scenery was very appropriate and was painted by Prof. Driggs and Leconte Stewart.

The music by the orchestra under the direction of prof. D. S. Smith was exceptionally fine.

The whole performance was a great credit to Prof. Driggs and to the Ricks Academy where he is the instructor of music.
The **Student Rays** spoke proudly of its graduating seniors who had contributed to the dramatics of Ricks Academy.

The year 1910-1911 stands as Ricks’ banner year in dramatics. Never before has so much work been done in the line and never before has so much talent been displayed. . . . Those having taken part in every play cast by their class and in the annual play are Horace Hodge and Spencer Little. Others who have taken part in most of the plays and who are recognized among the best in school are Elmer Johnson, Vandes Price, Lynne Driggs, LeConte Stewart, Ike Simpson, Zina Hansen and Ethel Young. . . . In passing of this class from the school Ricks will lose much of her dramatic talent.34

**1911 - 1912**

The theatrical season begins this year on the sad note of the auditorium being converted to academic space.

During the holidays the auditorium underwent a very successful operation. Its entire stage was removed and a rostrum of much smaller proportions was substituted. The maple floor was extended so as to cover all the spare ground. We are quite delighted with the improvement shown already, both in acoustic properties and capacity. The stage was not necessary to our purposes, and its space can be more profitably used.35

This is not the only time that the theatre facilities will be taken away to provide room for some other academic area. The Elocution teacher for the year was Miss Irene Bassett, who continued producing dramas at the Flamm Opera House downtown.

The Senior class of the Ricks Academy will present the beautiful four-act drama, "Twixt Love and Money," at the Flamm Opera House Tuesday evening, March 19. The class has practiced under the direction of Miss Irene Bassett for a long while, and are now prepared to give a vivid interpretation of the play.36

Both the senior play and the faculty play, *A Man of the World*, were performed at the commencement week activities on the twenty-ninth and thirtieth of April, respectively. The faculty play had performed before this time on 12 April.37
While the Academy dramatists were forced out of the auditorium, at least they were being forced into a rather nice facility in the Flamm Opera House. It, too, was being remodeled and upgraded.

At a recent meeting of the stockholders of the H. Flamm Company, they decided to proceed at once with some extensive improvements on their Rexburg property, including the remodeling of the opera house. The opera house is to be enlarged and fitted up in the interior with modern furnishings. A raised floor will be put in, as will also a balcony. The stage will be enlarged and fitted with new scenery. The roof will be raised so as to permit curtains being drawn up. The house will have a capacity of about 800 seats. This will make it one of the best playhouses in the State.38

1912 - 1913

The course title of Elocution was changed this year to Oral Expression and was taught by Vera Rich. The Hyrum Manwaring history states, "The Dramatic Department did some good work and put on live plays," though there is no data on any plays being performed other than the opera by the Music Department.

We desire to commend to our readers the beautiful comic opera, "Sinbad, the Sailor," to be presented at the Flamm Opera House Friday, March 28, by the Academy choir. The Choir has been training for some time under the able leadership of Prof. L. Sardoni. Miss Vera Rich has charge of the dramatic presentation, at which she has special capability. Mrs. Sardoni is accompanist.40

1913 - 1914

The teacher for Oral Expression changed as often as the school calendar, with the new instructor this year being Lucile Cannon.

The Academy's auditorium being remodeled into a gym-lecture hall facility did not mean the name was changed, as we see from this bulletin of the Academy's opening in October of 1913. The auditorium is being repapered and having other improvements made that will be much appreciated by those attending. The whole building will present a greatly improved appearance this year over any previous year.41
Not only was this physical plant undergoing a change, but the work week at the Academy as well, as is stated in Principal Dalby's report to Church school Superintendent, H. H. Cummings, in September of 1913.

We have found the practice of having six days of school a week a shorter term to be beneficial to the students, not only in the matter of having more time to work on farms, but also in the matter of discipline. We have a great deal less trouble in handling the students if we do not give them too much time to be idle.

On February 21 and 23, 1914, the Music Department, with the assistance of the Oral Expression, produced Gilbert and Sullivan's, The Mikado. The music director was Professor Francis Findlay, with Miss Lucile Cannon directing the staging. The choreography was created by Edna Ricks, who also assisted in the orchestra. It was performed downtown at the Flamm Opera House and then traveled the following Friday to Idaho Falls, thirty miles south of Rexburg, for its last performance. The news articles were most complimentary of the overall production.

On April 17th the Seniors whose faces appear elsewhere in this issue [Student Rays], produced Pinero's comedy, "Sweet Lavender." The play was well cast, and after many rehearsals it was produced, a production which pleased everyone. The following Saturday, we motored down to Lewisville, and there repeated the performance. Perhaps our pocketbook was not swelled as much as we would have liked, but nevertheless we had a splendid time and our professional career was ended.

We wish to extend our hearty appreciation to Miss Cannon, for her untiring efforts, and also to Principal Dalby, whose valuable suggestions added polish to our work, also to Miss Dunbar, whose artistic fingers created for us wondrous beauty. We extend our thanks even if our beauty was as "the morning dew which goeth early away."

The final drama of the year was an original dramatization of a play script by Miss Lucile Cannon and her English class. The play was based on George Eliot's, Silas Marner, and was performed by the sophomores for the Academy in May of 1914. It was reviewed as a
successful production with great praise for Miss Cannon for attempting and succeeding in such a project.\textsuperscript{45}

1914 - 1915

Elocution was the title given again to courses dealing with speech and drama this year, with the instructor being Miss Mary Merkley. The only performance documented in available data is that of the opera, Saul, which was about the downfall of King Saul and his succession by King David. The music director was Professor W. H. Burgener, with Professor Hyrum Manwaring directing the staging. Miss Mary Merkley directed the dancing, which added a great deal to the overall production.\textsuperscript{46}

1915 - 1916

A first in the history of theatre at Ricks Academy occurred this year with the production of its first Shakespeare play, As You Like It. The play was produced in March and played twice in Rexburg and then traveled to Sugar City and Parker.

The Shakespearean play, "As You Like It," was successfully presented this Friday evening at the Flamm Opera House by the elocution class of the Academy. There was a large attendance and all thoroughly enjoyed the play. Miss Merkley has charge of the training and deserves credit for such a highly successful presentation. The play was well presented and entertaining, and all should feel a satisfaction in patronizing the efforts of these talented young people.\textsuperscript{47}

The Ricks Academy organized a Dramatic Club under the direction of Miss Mary Merkley, this being her second year with the school.

The R. A. Dramatic Club will present about March 1, "College Days," a lively little play in four acts. This is as fascinating and sensational a play as you ever witnessed and is produced by a body of players who will make you feel the real thrill of college life, whether you have been a student or not. Our coach, Miss Mary Merkley, is the very impersonation of college spirit and is going to make everybody else feel it. Watch the billboards for "College
Days” and come out and get your soul full of that school life and spirit, that the young in college feels. On 12 April 1916 the senior class presented the concluding season performance with **Commencement Days**, in the Flamm Opera House. The play was directed by Professor Manwaring, who was assisted by Miss Merkley, with some dance instruction.

The principal of the Academy, A. B. Christenson, in an effort to speed up the process of acquiring a new classroom and gym facility for the school, spent an evening making sure the move would have to be made. He entered the old auditorium early in the evening and began bolting to the gym floor desks and chairs that had previously been free to move in and out of the space as needed. By the breaking of dawn the entire third floor of the Academy was covered with bolted down furniture. This left the school board no other option than to proceed on the new building which would sit Northeast of the present structure. The new facility would include a gym, swimming pool, and most importantly, a new auditorium.

**1916 – 1917**

This was the first year the Academy published a yearbook that was independent from other publications. From the events calendar, printed in this original Rixida yearbook of 1917, is the following information.

February 13—Tuesday; the Alumni Association presents “Cousin Kate” in the Flamm Opera House.
March 30 and 31—The school choir presents the opera, “The Bo'sn's Bride,” in the Flamm Opera House to a large and appreciative audience.
April 2—The opera presented in Sugar City.
April 11—The school play, “Comrades,” is cast.
April 12—A rumor is heard that school might close early and the school play is dropped.
Algie Eggertson became the new Elocution teacher for this year, but according to available data the only play that was actually performed was the opera, Bo'sn's Bride, which was under the direction of Professor Paxman. This was the first time in the history of the Academy, that a professional was brought in to play the lead role in the operetta. This idea would be repeated several times in the years to come. The guest artist was J. W. Summerhays of Salt Lake City.
NOTES

2. Ibid., 7 February 1905.
3. Ibid., 16 February 1905.
4. Ibid., 16 November 1905.
5. Ibid., 11 January 1906.
6. Ibid., 22 February 1906.
7. Ibid., 17 January 1907.
8. Ibid., 2 May 1907.
9. Ibid., 14 November 1907.
10. Ibid., 6 February 1908.
11. Ibid., 5 March 1908.
12. Ibid., 26 March 1908.
13. Ibid., 30 April 1908.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.

17. Hyrum Manwaring, "Ricks College History," Archives and Special Collections, Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho.

19. Ibid.

22 Rexburg (Idaho) Ricks College, Student Rays, 1901, p. 69.
24 Hyrum Manwaring, "Ricks College History," Archives and Special Collections, Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho.
26 Ibid., 3 February 1910.
27 Ibid., 17 February 1910.
28 Ibid., 17 March 1910.
29 Ibid., 23 December 1910.
30 Ibid., 20 September 1912.
31 Ibid., 10 February 1911.
32 Ibid., 10 March 1911.
33 Ibid., 31 March 1911.
34 Rexburg (Idaho) Ricks College, Student Rays, May 1911.
36 Ibid., 15 March 1912.
37 Ibid., 26 April 1912.
38 Ibid., 3 May 1912.
39 Hyrum Manwaring, "Ricks College History," Archives and Special Collections, Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho.
40 Rexburg (Idaho) Current-Journal, 12 March 1913.
41 Ibid., 10 October 1913.
42 Ibid., 12 September 1913.
43 Ibid., 27 February 1914.
44 Rexburg (Idaho) Ricks College, Student Rays, May 1914, p. 21.
45 Rexburg (Idaho) Current-Journal, 8 May 1914.
46 Ibid., 7 May 1915.


51. Ricks Academy yearbook, Rixida, 1917, pp. 65 and 69.

CHAPTER III

DECADE OF TRANSITION

1917 - 1918

The ten years from 1917 to 1927 was a maturing time for the Academy, as it worked towards junior college status and the elimination of high school courses. The Rexburg newspaper, the Current-Journal changed its name to the Rexburg Journal in January of 1918. The newly named paper then advertised the news of the Academy's new name.

The name of the Academy was officially changed to Ricks College at the meeting of the district board of Mar. 1. This was the occasion of official opening of the new gymnasium built this summer (Fig. 3). Appropriate exercises were held. The presidents of all the stakes of this district were present with one exception. A large gathering of the people of Rexburg and surrounding country enjoyed the day there. There was a good program, basketball game and dinner in the evening. The new building is an imposing structure of native stone, costing above $60,000. On the lower floor is a large swimming pool, dining room, kitchen, and domestic science department. The second floor is taken up with a handsome auditorium (Fig. 4), the third floor being with the gymnasium. The Ricks College is a big asset to the community. An able faculty is in charge of the work, with Principal Geo. S. Romney at the head. The institution deserves the united support of the community.  

According to Jerry Roundy, the word "Normal" was a part of Rick's new name, making it "Ricks Normal College." Roundy indicates that the word normal was not removed from the official name until 1923, when the school was named Ricks College, the name it carries to this day.  

Data available gives two names of individuals who were associated with the Oral Expression courses offered this year, Heloise Day and
Fig. 3. The new gymnasium building, dedicated 1919.

Fig. 4. Auditorium house with posts, second floor of gymnasium building
Sarah Gillespie. Whether these two women served at the same time or at different times during the same year is not known.

The Student Rays activity calendar printed in its commencement edition identifies two productions for the 1917-18 school year. "March 22—Faculty present Milestones. April 5—Seniors present At the End of the Rainbow."

1918 - 1919

Sarah Gillespie was serving her second year as instructor of Oral Expression, and assisted with the operetta as well in 1919.

Look out for the operetta next Thursday, April 3rd—"The Pennant." Bro. Burgener and the choir are working hard on the music, and Miss Gillespie and Bro. Manwaring are also busy assisting with the staging.

The only other play of record is the senior play, The Touchdown, that was performed on 18 April 1919.

1919 - 1920

This would be the last of three years Sarah Gillespie would be the instructor of Oral Expression at Ricks Normal College. Though her length of stay at the College was longer than most previous instructors of Oral Expression, the available data suggests that she never assisted with more than one play and one operetta each year.

"Dolly Reforming Herself," is the title of the new school play which will be presented by the dramatic art department on the 19th of December. To secure a cast for this play, Miss Gillespie conducted a general tryout of the whole school, with splendid results. It was something new, but the response was splendid, showing the great interest taken in this very important department of education.

... The judges in the tryout were Mrs. Potter, Miss Gillespie, and Miss Jensen.

The 19 December 1919 production of Dolly Reforming Herself, was presented in the College auditorium, and was repeated again on New
Year's Day at the Elk Theatre in downtown Rexburg. The Elk Theatre was originally built as an Electric Theatre or movie house but was remodeled to house regular drama in 1916.

The Elk Theatre is to occupy a new and larger home during the coming season. Thos. George has built up his business until the patronage overfills his present house. John Jones from whom he leases already contracted to build a larger and better theatre as soon as the weather permits. The new theatre is to be built on the west of the present hall. It will be wider and deeper, with a seating capacity of 600 or over. The house will be provided with a large and modern stage to accommodate regular dramas.

The new structure will be built of rock and carry two stories. An upper story will be added to the present building making of the block a building corresponding to the W. O. W. block. An alley will be left open on the west side of the building so as to provide for side exits and ventilation that will add to the comfort and safety of patrons of the show house. The building will be properly furnished as a show house and made adequate to well supply the patronage here for many years.

The presentation of "Dolly Reforming Herself" at the Elk Theatre at a matinee on New Year's Day was a pleasing feature of the holiday entertainment in our city. It was given by the Dramatic Club of the Ricks Normal College, under direction of Miss Sarah Gillespie of the Elocution Department.

The play was presented in four acts and represented a number of English Society people undertaking to reform after listening to an inspirational New Year's sermon. The play was well presented, some of the players acquitting themselves as well as professionals. The staging and costuming were very appropriate and interesting. The presentation pleased and drew favorable applause and comment from the audience. Efforts and development of this kind are especially deserving commendation and patronage of the public.

Yokohama Maid, a Japanese comic opera in two acts, was presented by the Music Department 12 March 1920.

The seniors presented All of a Sudden Peggy during the last week of school in April.

1920 - 1921

The new Oral Expression teacher for this year was Betty Noble, and Hyrum Manwaring indicates, "There was some good work done in dramatic arts, but a college play was not put on."
The only performance for the public this year was the operetta produced by the Music Department.

**BIG COMIC OPERA, "THE HERMIT OF HAWAII." NEXT FRIDAY, MARCH 18TH.**

The College choir, consisting of 60 voices, will present the best entertainment ever given in Rexburg. The chorus will be assisted by a 12 piece orchestra. The cast includes 13 solo voices of the best talent in the school and city.

Rexburg people will recall with much pleasure the school opera of last year. Prof. Southwick says he has something even better to offer this year.

The Salt Lake Costume Company is costuming the affair so a real Hawaiian atmosphere will exist.

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**1921 - 1922**

Jessica Bird took over the Oral Expression instruction and directed the first play of the season that performed 16 December 1921.

On the night of December 16th, the R. N. C. is going to produce the annual drama of the student body. The play chosen for this year is a very good one, being a comedy of the first order. A competent cast is now hard at work on the play and under the efficient direction of Miss Bird, is holding daily rehearsals. The student body and patrons of the school are looking forward to the presentation of the play as the big school event before the holidays.

On 17 and 18 March 1922, the Music Department presented *The Gypsy Rover*. The following is a review of the production.

The Ricks College Choir presented "The Gypsy Rover," a beautiful three-act opera, to a very appreciative audience Friday and Saturday nights. The presentation was excellent and received high praise from all who attended. The chorus singing and orchestral accompaniment was delightful throughout. The solo parts and duets were likewise well rendered and pleased. Prof. Ralph Jensen, the director, deserves great commendation for this effort, which is one of the best ever given at the institution. The staging and costuming and dancing under direction of Miss Jessica Bird was likewise excellent throughout and made the success of the entertainment complete. It was an artistic treat and it is regrettable that financial conditions prevent them from presenting it in other towns, as it would undoubtedly serve to advertise the institution favorably.
The play, Clarence, written by Booth Tarkington, was presented by the student body as a part of the commencement activities during the last week of school in May,\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{1922 - 1923}

The first theatrical event of this season was marked by the visit of a former Ricks Academy faculty member, Mrs. Algie Eggertson Ballif. Mrs. Ballif, who was then Miss Eggertson, served as the Elocution instructor at Ricks in 1916-17.

The second number of the Lyceum course will be given Saturday night at the tabernacle. The play, "The Great Divide," will be read by Mrs. Algie Eggertson Ballif, a professor of the B.Y.U. at Provo. Mrs. Ballif is an excellent dramatic reader having only recently returned from Boston, where she studied during the summer.\textsuperscript{17}

This year promises to be the most successful in the history of the school as far as dramatics is concerned. The interest and enthusiasm displayed in the try-outs for the school play, "The Charm School," is an evidence of what can be expected. About sixty students tried for places and every one of them showed marked ability. Because of this fact, it has been planned to allow these aspirants to produce one act plays and other forms of entertainment on Saturday evenings at the College auditorium.\textsuperscript{18}

The Charm School, by Alice Duer Miller and Robert Milton, was presented 18 January 1923 under the direction of the new Oral Expression teacher, Gladys M. Smith.\textsuperscript{19} Miss Smith also directed Carlyle Moore's Stop Thief, a student body production of the senior play, The Private Secretary, by Hawtrey.\textsuperscript{20}

'One of the best plays staged at the Ricks College' was the criticism of the audience after witnessing the excellent dramatic showing of the Senior Class in their play, "The Private Secretary." The play was high class royalty comedy, and was a scream from the start to the finish. The cast had exceptional ability, and carried their parts to a perfection.\textsuperscript{21}
Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta, Mikado, was presented by the Music Department under the direction of Professor Hansen who was assisted by Jennette Ricks. The production was staged in the College auditorium on 16 and 17 March 1923.  

1923 - 1924

Harry Nelson was hired as a substitute for Gladys Smith during this school year, but there is not a record of her returning to the position of Oral Expression instructor. Mr. Nelson was the first male instructor in the subject in more than ten years and interestingly enough chose Little Women as his first production.

Thursday and Friday, Jan. 17-18 at 8:15 P.M. when the "asbestos" passes from view at the Ricks College auditorium, local playgoers will have unfolded before them a comfortable old room with a hanging on the walls; books filled with recesses; and Christmas roses blossoming in the windows; a room pervaded with a pleasant atmosphere of home peace. The Ricks Dramatic Club has promised Louisa M. Alcott her heart's desire when "Little Women" is produced at the "school on the hill."

This play has no appeal for one who has never been a wife, husband, father, mother, daughter, son, old maid, bachelor, sweetheart, lover or "flapper." The opportunity of seeing such a production is indeed very rare as cost of producing costume plays is usually beyond the vision of many of our modern commercialized managers. The time of the play is taken during the Civil War and special efforts have been made by the Ricks College players to give a detailed exhibition of that period. "Little Women" is a play with a great human appeal that will interest the old and young alike. It carries with it all the vim and enthusiasm necessary to interest the girl of 1930 and yet able to hold those who were girls in 1830, spellbound.

The Ricks College Dramatic Club is made up of unusual talent with which to insure a banner production and their efforts indicate a "good play done in a good way."

... Prof. Nelson is directing the students. Clifton Ricks and Ray Duffin are managing the production.

The first week in March the campus was visited by a professional touring company. This is the first appearance of its kind, according to available data.
Just one week from next Monday the Moroni Olson Players will bring to Rexburg, their final production of the season, "Beyond the Horizon." This very worthwhile play will be produced 'before the footlights' at the Ricks College auditorium and shows every indication of crowning all former efforts of Olson's All Star company.

"Beyond the Horizon" is a thoroughly American play written by the popular author, Eugene O'Neill, whose stage successes have received no little favorable comment. The type of play is entirely foreign to many of the characteristic elements of Olson's former productions. The satire of "Candida" is entirely lacking and many of the unpleasant situations of "Ambush" and "Jane Clegg" will be missing. It is an American play done in an American way which will cause an American audience to respond with genuine American delight.

Olson will bring with him his entire company of talented artists who will appear in parts which do justice to their variable talents. The college has promised them every consideration in housing the production and making it possible for the audience to gain full appreciation from the efforts of the players.

The opera this year was entitled Martha, and was performed 21 and 22 March 1924. Professor Hansen was in charge of the music and Mrs. Apollo Hansen handled the stage direction.

The senior play chosen for the year was Seventeen by Booth Tarkington. As well as being staged on campus, the production planned an extensive tour of the Upper Snake River Valley which extends thirty miles north and seventy-five miles south of the township of Rexburg.

Prof. Nelson, who is directing the company [Seventeen] reports exceptional possibilities among the successful contestants. The fact that the plot of the play is centered around the ages of those who will produce it, will insure a very worthwhile production. A very extensive tour is being planned for the club. Prof. Leland Jorgensen and Prof. Nelson left yesterday for various cities in the Upper Snake River Valley to arrange the itinerary. It is planned, in addition to the production at Rexburg on May 16th, to include the towns of Blackfoot, Shelley, Rigby, Parker, Ashton, Driggs and Victor. Other towns are also under consideration.

The senior class of 1924 and the school's Dramatic Club worked together this year to purchase a new curtain for the auditorium. Up to this time the curtain was rolled on a pipe and was a distracting noise maker. The new curtain was constructed by Z.C.M.I., a large department store based in Salt Lake City. The total cost of the new curtain was
$148.00, and its debut was made before the public on 1 May 1924, with the performances of two short plays, **Suppressed Desires**, by Susan Glaspell, and **The Valiant**, by Holworthy Hall and Robert Middlemass.28

When the new $148.00 velour curtain separates on the stage of the Ricks College auditorium on the night of May day at 8:15 P.M., playgoers of Rexburg will have unfolded before them a setting for one of the cleverest comedies which will have been produced in Rexburg. "Suppressed Desires" in two acts, will be the first subject for the admiration of the theatre lovers and the criticism of the "high-brows." With a short intermission of high class music this unusual program will conclude with one of the strongest dramatic appeals that has ever been written, "The Valiant," in one act.

... Those who have attended the splendid programs of the past at the auditorium of the college will welcome with open arms, the announcement that the program next Thursday will no doubt be featured by a new front drop curtain for the stage. ... The curtain is of a beautiful purple velour cleverly designed with R. C. and the class numerals.29

**1924 - 1925**

The department of Oral Expression and Dramatic Art will be very greatly strengthened under the direction of Mrs. Blanche K. McKee, a lady of very exceptional ability and considerable experience. Of her, Dr. Charles H. Woolbert of the University of Illinois, under whom she worked this summer, writes: "I have found Mrs. McKee a woman of quick intelligence and keen interest. Beyond any doubt her heart is in the teaching of speech and her thought is given to the various problems of the subject. In many instances in the courses of this summer she has been the first in my classes to catch the point of view I have been presenting, and I have been struck with her sympathy and earnestness of purpose. I have also been impressed with a certain fineness in her nature and character which I think fits her as a teacher in general, and specifically as a teacher in Speech subjects. She has been faithful to every duty, has turned in to us a paper of unusual merit and I have assigned to her an 'A' grade."30

Mrs. Ruth Biddulph, a former student of Mrs. McKee, speaks favorably of her experiences with this instructor.

She [Blanche McKee] was a woman with a great deal of experience in the theatre, having been an actress on Broadway. She was a Thomas girl from Salt Lake, and was a sister to Albert Thomas, who used to be president of the University of Utah. ... She was a very artistic woman and produced very artistic plays, as well as writing.31
Under the leadership and talent of Mrs. McKee, Ricks performed four plays this year. In January of 1925, The Fortune Hunter, by Winchell Smith was produced in the college auditorium.

Some people say it was Ricks' best play. We will leave that to individual taste. Two large enthusiastic audiences, bursts of laughter, a tear or two, prolonged applause, spoke loudly the fact that "The Fortune Hunter" was a huge success.32

The other productions for the year included When the Cat's Away, Everybody's Husband, and Just Suppose.33

The college had acquired the new velour curtain for the stage last season and was continuing its efforts to improve the auditorium facility with the purchase of new scenery.

SCHOOL TO HAVE NEW SCENERY. This year Ricks has a new and important project to put over in connection with dramatics. This is to buy a new set of scenes. Plans are now being made to remodel the stage and equip it with a kind of scenic curtain now being used and highly recommended by the leading dramatists... Clubs will join in activities to help with the project which will mean a great deal of improvement.34

The Rexburg First Ward presented a production of Daddy Long-Legs, by Jean Webster, in the college auditorium on 12 and 13 December 1924.35

The Music Department presented Chimes of Normandy, the opera production for the season.36

1925 – 1926

Blanche Kendall McKee (Fig. 5) [the last name spelling of McKee is also used in printed data] served her second year as Oral Expression instructor this year and directed four plays. On 2 February 1926, That Blond Person, a one-act comedy by Helen F. Bagg, was presented by
the college in the Rexburg Tabernacle. The tabernacle was a large meeting house designed to hold several congregations or wards of the Latter-day Saint Church at one time.  

The next day after the presentation of *That Blond Person* at the tabernacle, *Dear Me* was produced in the college auditorium. The play written by Luther Long and Hale Hamilton played on 3 and 4 February 1926. Professor Dean and the Ricks College Orchestra provided music between the three acts.  

On 12 March 1926, *How A Woman Keeps A Secret*, a one-act play by Frank Dumont, was presented as a part of the Amagus Girls Club's "Evening of Entertainment."  

*Old Lady* appears to have been a play photographed for the *Rixida* that year, but there is no printed data available concerning author or production dates.  

The outstanding musical event of the year was the opera, "Faust," by Gounod, presented in Rexburg March 18th and 19th, and at Blackfoot on March 22nd. The opera was successfully produced by talent within the school, with the exception of four principals, who were chosen from former students of the school. Over 110 people took part in the production. Financially the opera was a success, nearly six hundred dollars being paid for admission.  

**1926 - 1927**

A major improvement of the college's auditorium was accomplished this year with the removal of several support posts that were located in the house (Fig. 6). Mrs. Ruth H. Biddulph recalled the situation.

When I started we were in the old gym building. You went up the steps on the outside and through the front doors. There was a big hallway there in the entrance way with stairs that went up each side to the top floor where the gym was. There was a little office space on each side and then a large door that opened right into the auditorium.

Now when I first came to Ricks the auditorium had posts in it. The posts were there to support the big gym floor up above. It used to be quite a joke among the students. Each day we would go to the
auditorium for a devotional service, and of course prayers were never assigned ahead of time; on the spot prayers. Our joke was we would hide behind the posts so they wouldn't see us. Of course you could do a little whispering and other things behind the posts; so the posts became quite endearing to us, yet they were a nuisance because you had to be careful when you got a seat for the opera or the play.

But sometime when I was going up there, I suspect it was after I had been going for a couple of years that they took the posts down. That was a great event! It was right over on the corner across from the college that they burned the posts. We had a big rally and a big to-do about burning the posts.

This event was recorded in the Rixida yearbook as well.

Two years ago the girls of Ricks College raised the cry, "Down with the posts!" Although the desired results were not accomplished at that time, the seed was planted. On February the eighth the College Student Body and the Board of Education successfully completed the mammoth task of remodeling the auditorium. The hated posts, which so annoyingly obscured the view of the members of the audience, have been removed and huge steel beams put up instead. The floor has been relaid, the seats rearranged and the stage enlarged both in length and depth; which adds a great deal to its appearance and its convenience.

... At present our auditorium compares favorably with any in Southern Idaho.

Two days after the completion of the auditorium's remodeling, Ludwig Fulda and Henery DeMille's The Lost Paradise, was presented under the direction of Blanche K. McKey. Mrs. McKey also directed A Strenuous Life, written by Richard Walton Tully, which was presented during commencement week at the college.

The biggest musical event of the year at Ricks is the presentation of the opera. The opera chosen and presented this year was "The Bohemian Girl," by Balfe. The music department feels extremely proud, as the opera was successfully presented by a cast of principals, chorus and orchestra consisting entirely of students and faculty of the college. The opera was presented in Rexburg March eighteenth and nineteenth, in Blackfoot March twenty-second, and in Shelly March twenty-third. The Ricks opera is becoming an annual affair and the people of the Upper Snake River Valley are learning of the school through it.
Fig. 5. Blanche Kendall McKey

Fig. 6. Auditorium in gymnasium building after posts were removed.
The dramatic art program for this school year has been an intensive one under the able direction of Miss Henderson. She has been unceasingly active in her effort to develop the latent talent of Ricks College.

Through her efforts many students have taken leading roles in plays. During this school year there have been more students taking part than at any other time in the history of Ricks College. It has been her policy to give all a fair chance and especially those who have needed the development most. It is the general opinion of all that Miss Henderson has accomplished a great deal, both in developing talent and in giving noteworthy entertainments.

The first production by Myrtle E. Henderson (Fig. 7) was Barry Conners' The Patsy, which played 30 November 1927 and was repeated again 14 February 1928. Mrs. Ruth Biddulph, who acted in The Patsy as a student under Miss Henderson, recalled her impressions of Miss Henderson as a teacher and director.

Now Myrtle Henderson was a very good director and did very well with the drama plays, very good plays. But, she hadn't had the theatre experience naturally that Mrs. McKey had had. But she was very good and very thorough, very strict and quite stern.

Between the two performances of The Patsy, Miss Henderson produced a comedy-mystery entitled In The Next Room.

Mystery! Thrills! Entertainment! All this and much more will be experienced by the audience "In The Next Room," a three-act mystery comedy by Eleanor [last name not clear] and Harriet Ford. It is the second play to be given by the students of the Ricks College under the direction of Miss Myrtle Henderson and will be presented at the College auditorium, Wednesday, February 1st.

It is one of the most thrilling and exciting plays ever written, and it has some very good wholesome humor in it.

The situations are very tense and hold the audience in suspense till the very last minute of the play. In fact Miss Henderson informs us, it is so exciting that the remainder of the cast who are not on the stage at rehearsals sit in suspense and watch the others practice until their turns come.

The play lacks a great many of the objectionable features that ordinary plays often have. It does not unravel itself until the end and no one will know or guess how it will turn out until it has ended itself.

Miss Henderson has a very strong cast, very capable of putting the play over to perfection. They are all well adapted to their roles.
The play is already memorized which proves that it is well underway. Everyone who fails to see this comedy will certainly miss a thrill.

In March the Music Department rendered their production of Gilbert and Sullivan's The Pirates of Penzance. Professor Harry Dean was in charge of the music with Myrtle Henderson handling the stage direction and choreography.

The last play of the season was The Bust [listed as The Push in the Manwaring Manuscript], written by Charles F. Harrison and directed by Miss Henderson.
NOTES

1 Rexburg (Idaho), Rexburg Journal, 15 March 1918 [formally the Current-Journal, name changed January 1918].


3 Hyrum Manwaring, "Ricks College History," Archives and Special Collections, Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho, p. 30.

4 Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College Student Rays, Commencement Issue 1918, p. 59.

5 Rexburg (Idaho), Rexburg Journal, 28 March 1919.

6 Ricks College Yearbook, Rixida, 1919, p. 56.

7 Rexburg (Idaho), Rexburg Journal, 21 November 1919.

8 Rexburg (Idaho), Current-Journal, 18 February 1916.

9 Rexburg (Idaho), Rexburg Journal, 2 January 1920.

10 Ricks College Yearbook, Rixida, 1920, p. 50.

11 Rexburg (Idaho), Rexburg Journal, 19 March 1920.

12 Hyrum Manwaring, "Ricks College History," Archives and Special Collections, Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho, p. 53.

13 Rexburg (Idaho), Rexburg Journal, 11 March 1921.

14 Ibid., 9 December 1921.

15 Ibid., 24 March 1922.

16 Ibid., 26 May 1922.

17 Ibid., 10 November 1922.

18 Ibid., 1 December 1922.

19 Ibid., 19 January 1923.
20Ricks College Yearbook, Rixida, 1923, p. 70.
21Ibid.
22Rexburg (Idaho), Rexburg Journal, 9 March 1923.
23Ibid., 11 January 1924.
24Ibid., 22 February 1924.
25Ibid., 14 March 1924.
26Ibid., 18 April 1924.
27Ibid.
28Ibid.
29Ibid., 25 April 1924.
30Ibid., 12 September 1924.
32Ricks College Yearbook, Rixida, 1925.
33Ibid.
34Rexburg (Idaho), Rexburg Journal, 24 October 1924.
35Ibid., 5 December 1924.
36Ricks College Yearbook, Rixida, 1925.
37Ibid., 1926.
38Ibid.
39Ibid.
40Ibid.
41Ibid.
42Mrs. Ruth H. Biddulph, interviewed in her home, Rexburg, Idaho, 6 January 1982.
43Ricks College Yearbook, Rixida, 1927.
44Ibid.
45Ibid.
46 Ibid., 1928.

47 Ibid.


49 Rexburg (Idaho), Rexburg Journal, 26 January 1928.

50 Ibid., 10 February 1928.

51 Ibid., 16 May 1928.
CHAPTER IV

MYRTLE E. HENDERSON

Myrtle Henderson, a graduate of Brigham Young University, first came to Ricks College in 1927. She was appointed instructor of public speaking and taught courses in the fundamentals of speech, interpretation, play production, and girls' physical education. Miss Henderson would remain at the college for six years, after which she would attend the Northwestern University at Evanston, Illinois, where she obtained her Master of Arts Degree.

1928 - 1929

The first play of the season was Laughter of Fools, which played 24 November 1928.

LARGE CROWD ATTENDS FIRST COLLEGE PLAY
The "Laughter of fools," which was presented Monday evening by the Dramatic Arts Department, ranks with the best productions the department has yet assayed. In portrayal it came up to the high standard set by "The Patsy" and other successes, and the play itself is charming in plot and action. The fact that the story deals with English life makes it slightly difficult to interpret the various roles successfully, but Miss Henderson's capable direction overcame any defects arising from this situation.

The outstanding characterization of the play was Merrill Cruiser's presentation of Col. Greig, an eccentric old man whose family deplores his homely habits. Mr. Cruiser displayed marked talent and contributed greatly to the comedy of the play.

Adalena Madsen, as the arrogant matron whose height of ambition is to get her daughter married off was very convincing.

The role of Doris Henly was very well done by Norma Bean, who made an attractive heroine.

Maxine Adams was splendid as Mabel Greig, the spoiled daughter, except that she was much too charming to warrant her failure to secure a husband. The way she quarreled with Cornel Christensen,
who portrayed her brother, Bertie Breig, appeared natural and unconstrained. Cornell was commendable as the sneering selfish son. Cleo Browning displayed unusual cleverness as Hubert Hughes, an ardent suitor of Mabel.

The heavy comedy came in the role of Elizabeth, the maid, taken by Donetta Parker, who admirably illustrated that beauty must give way to art. Miss Parker's work was well nigh perfect.

The hero, Captain Biddle, was handsomely done by Richard Egbert. Ivin Gee and Reed Moore added much to the success of the production by the skillful handling of their respective roles.

Miss Henderson and her students are to be congratulated on the success of their efforts and the school is expectantly looking forward to more plays as good as this one. 

The Pirates of Penzance, the Gilbert and Sullivan opera that was performed the year before by the Music Department, was revived for two performances on 12 and 13 February 1929. The occasion for its revival was a leadership conference sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The purpose of such a conference is to share new concepts and ideas relating to teachings and workings of organizations within the Church. The opera was performed for the guests of this conference.

The opera chosen for production by the Music Department for its annual presentation was another Gilbert and Sullivan, H.M.S. Pinafore.

After careful consideration the music department has chosen the opera, "H. M. S. Pinafore," or "The Lake that Loved a Sailor," written by W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan. This opera is considered one of the best of Gilbert's works and with the able cast of principals and chorus we can expect a production that will surpass any former opera production at Ricks College.

... The opera will be presented at the Ricks College Auditorium on March 15-16; also at Blackfoot and perhaps at Shelley. The departments are beginning intensive work on it and promise a super production.

The music for Pinafore was under the direction of Harry A. Dean, with Miss Henderson directing the staging and Victor Chandler handling the lighting.
The last two productions of the year directed by Miss Henderson were Lady of Lyons on 24 April 1929, and The Irresistible Marmaduke, which played in May during commencement week.

1929 - 1930

To be a Viking means to be fearless, to be a friend, to share joy and sorrow and to press forward bravely in the face of danger. These splendid attributes are found in the personality of Myrtle Henderson of the Dramatic art Department of Ricks College. Her splendid achievements in dramas prove her fearlessness; and the difficulties she has overcome, prove her perseverance in pressing bravely forward in the face of danger and difficulty. To be one with the students and to be sympathetic with their joys and sorrows is her finest attribute. So as a representative of Ricks College Vikings she excels.

Some of her achievements are: the successful presentation of two dramas, "The Celebrity," and "Baby Mine;" and the commendable staging of the opera, "The Mikado." Then, too, she has made public speakers of some, readers of others, actors of still others and friends of all the student body.

This tribute to Myrtle Henderson taken from the Rixida of 1930, speaks most highly of her. Just what "difficulties she has overcome" is not known from the printed data, but it is known that her fiance was killed in World War I, and that she remained single the rest of her life. "However, because of the great love she had for drama, it can surely be said that she was married to her work."

The first play of the season this year was "The Celebrity," and the Dramatic Art Department has been 'celebrated' ever since. It was a delightful, unusual comedy by Jerome K. Jerome. The characters were interesting and the situations unique. It is an English play with an English setting and Jerome K. Jerome has made it sparkle with fun.

The cast was well chosen and under Miss Henderson's capable direction was a delight to its audiences.

The presentation of "Baby Mine," Margaret Mayo's delightful comedy, was one of the outstanding achievements of the dramatic department this year.

The plot depicts the efforts of a petted, pampered wife to retain the love of a none-too-shrewd husband. In doing this, she enlists the help of her friend, Aggie, whose husband, Jimmy, unwillingly carries out the plans made by the schemers. The zeal
with which he goes about “borrowing” a baby results in his “borrowing” three and leads to some uproariously funny situations. The players did exceptionally splendid work, and because the play itself was of the popular type, it always found an appreciative audience. It was presented twice in Rexburg, once in Shelley and four times in various wards of the Stake. 12

To give honor where honor is due would, at this time, be showering the path of the Ricks College Music Department with glory. As a result of the united cooperation of both the cast and directors, the opera, “The Mikado,” became one of the most outstanding features of the year. Mr. Dean, Miss Henderson, and all others who are in any way connected with the production of the “Mikado” should feel very highly complimented. 13

The commencement play, “Once There Was A Princess,” by Juliet Wolbor Tompkins, was presented by the Play Production Class. It was a delightful comedy with an unusually clever plot. Although the cast was a large one all parts were done in a manner that reflected careful study and practice.

We congratulate the class upon the success of their final project in the year’s work. They have added new laurels to themselves and to the Dramatic Department. 14

1930 – 1931

The course offerings in the public speaking area remained the same this year, but the number of productions dropped by one. Available data reveals two plays and one opera that were performed this season.

“The Intimate Strangers,” Booth Tarkington’s sparkling comedy, was presented to an appreciative audience December 10 [1930]. It was one of the most outstanding achievements of the dramatic department this year, and because of the successful portrayal of its interesting characters, caused us to look forward to other activities from this department.

The cast was well-chosen under Miss Henderson’s capable direction and was a delight to its audience. 15

“The Crisis,” depicting a flaming page of Civil war history, was the most difficult piece of dramatic achievement ever attempted by Ricks College students. The drama was typical of the Civil War period at the time of Lincoln’s election, showing the attitudes and feelings of the Southerners towards the slaves.

Miss Henderson is to be congratulated for the splendid interpretation and the well-fitting of these historical characters. The acting possibilities were perfected. Each part was well cast, and each actor interpreted his part well.

... This constructive piece of work was three times presented, twice in Rexburg, and once in Shelley. 16
The Ricks College Opera has been traditional for years. This year [on 25 and 26 March 1931] Victor Herbert's "Red Mill" was produced. Two able directors, fifteen principals, forty chorus voices, elaborate costumes, picturesque Dutch settings and a fourteen-piece orchestra were the great factors in the success of the opera, not the least important of these factors being the directors.

It has been said that the success or failure of an undertaking depends upon the capacity of the director. The presentation of the "Red Mill" verified this statement. Much training was given the principals, chorus, and orchestra to produce such a well-polished production. Professor Dean, who was in charge of the opera, showed an enthusiastic leadership which made each singer feel his part and artistically portray it. He was very ably assisted by Miss Henderson who coached the dancing acts and instructed the students in the acting. Both directors should be highly complimented on their splendid work.

1931 - 1932

This year and the next two are lacking in data available. There is no obvious reason for the shortage of printed material, other than perhaps the Great Depression of the 1930s, which was responsible for cutbacks in finances for such luxuries as newspapers and yearbooks. A Ricks College Bulletin, which is similar to a pamphlet designed to solicit new students, gives this plea to patrons:

"Hard Times" are good school times. Why should any youth let his educational opportunity pass by because the economic conditions are bad? When the world walks, you run!

The College's catalogue for the year lists Myrtle Henderson as head of the Speech department with Fundamentals of Speech, Interpretation, Methods of Development and Delivery, and Play Production as courses.

From the aforementioned Ricks College Bulletin of 1931-32, we learn that, "The music and dramatic departments produced some of the finest and most difficult pieces of art ever attempted in the Upper Snake River Valley. We have no record of what those pieces of art were."
1932 - 1933

Myrtle Henderson added two new courses to the Speech curriculum this year, "Dialects and Stage Craft." 21

A Winter Quarter Ricks College Bulletin of 1932-33 lists Dramatic Art as a course of study and the following drama events:

"Drama: Peg of My Heart ... Drama: Twelfth Knight [sic]. Series of One-Act Plays." 22
NOTES

1Ricks College Course Catalogue, 1925-26.

2Robert Corey Tuckness, "The History of Theatre at Dixie
Junior College, St. George, Utah, From 1911 to 1973" (Thesis, Brigham
Young University, Provo, Utah, 1974), p. 39.

3Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College Student Rays, 28 November
1928.

4Ibid., 23 January 1929.

5Ibid., 20 February 1929.

6Ibid.

7Ricks College Yearbook, Rixida, 1929.

8Ibid.

9Ibid., 1930, p. 49.

10Robert Corey Tuckness, "The History of Theatre at Dixie
Junior College, St. George, Utah, From 1911 to 1973" (Thesis, Brigham
Young University, Provo, Utah, 1974), p. 39.

11Ricks College Yearbook, Rixida, 1930, p. 50.

12Ibid., p. 51.

13Ibid., p. 57.

14Ibid., p. 52.

15Ibid., 1931, p. 42.

16Ibid., p. 43.

17Ricks College Yearbook, Rixida, 1931, p. 47.

18Ricks College Quarterly Bulletin, 1932.

19Ricks College Course Catalogue, 1931-32.
20 Ricks College Quarterly Bulletin, 1932.

21 Ricks College Course Catalogue, 1932-33.

CHAPTER V

JOSEPH F. CATMULL

Joseph F. Catmull (Fig. 8), a graduate of the University of Utah with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1933, came to Ricks College in the fall of that year. He taught four years and then took a leave of absence for two years in 1937, to return to the University of Utah where he received a Master of Science degree in the spring of 1939. He resumed his professorship at Ricks that fall and taught five more years until the spring of 1944, at which time he took another leave of absence and went to the University of Minnesota. Upon receiving his Doctorate from the University of Minnesota in 1946, he returned to Ricks College but remained only one year. Lynn Benson, a former student of Joseph Catmull, and present chairman of the Theatre Department at Ricks College, recalled at least two reasons for Professor Catmull's decision to leave Ricks College.

In the fall of 1946, Fern [his wife] and I moved to Rexburg where I spent another year at Ricks College. Joe Catmull had been back to the University of Minnesota and received his Doctors Degree, but there was no theatre [facility] here at Ricks. He was not very interested in staying. I remember one incident where he told me the University of Utah had offered him a thousand dollars more a year than he was getting here at Ricks College to come back to the University of Utah. But, he had decided not to go. He had graduated from the University of Utah. Then later that year, he changed his mind and decided to go back. That would have been the spring of 1947.

While Professor Catmull was away working on his Doctorate, the College had remodeled the auditorium in the gym building into music rooms, leaving no practical theatre space in which to stage plays.
This is the second time in the College's history that the auditorium and stage facilities used by the drama instructors were remodeled for use by other academic areas of study.

1933 - 1934

The first play produced at Ricks College by Professor Catmull was The 'It' Girl, written by E. L. Paul. The play, performed by members of the freshman class, was presented 13 December 1933.6

The season's second production was The Count and the Co-ed.

On February twenty-second and twenty-third, the music department presented for the approval of the Leadership throng, "The Count and The Co-ed," a musical comedy production. The entertainment was directed by Professor John M. Anderson and assisted by Professor J. F. Catmull.7

The most outstanding dramatic performance of the year saw its debut with the presentation of the Varsity play, "The Woman He Married." This dramatic production was received with great enthusiasm by large audiences. It was exceptional in that it required unlimited character work. Critics were high in their praise for the fine interpretative work displayed by each member of the cast.8

1934 - 1935

Professor Catmull's work with the students inspired them to organize the "Honorary Dramatic Club" (Fig. 9).

Bringing into existence the only extant honorary club of the school, the Ricks College Dramatic Club was organized in January, 1935, for the purpose of promoting dramatics and keeping alive the fine spirit of dramatical endeavor in Ricks College. Ricks has accomplished many things in dramatics, but under the very able direction of Professor J. F. Catmull the school has reached new heights in this activity. Very splendid productions have been presented since Prof. Catmull came to Ricks and it is to perpetuate such a spirit of true acting and appreciation of the drama that this honorary club was organized.

Only those who have shown a marked ability and interest in dramatics have been invited to join the club.9

The club was no sooner organized than its members produced a play entitled, What Happened to Jones.
On January 23, the Dramatic Club presented the three act farce, "What Happened to Jones," by George H. Broadhurst, for the M. L. A. Lyceum. It was directed by Prof. Catmull and supported by the following cast: . . . The comedy arising from the complicated predicaments of Jones and clever acting of the cast kept the large audience laughing from start to finish. The College Orchestra played between acts.10

The freshman class presented Sun Up, by Lula Vollmer, on 31 January 1935. "... directed by Professor Joseph Catmull. It was a tragedy of the North Carolina Mountains and took place during the time of the World War."11

This year's outstanding musical entertainment carried its audiences far away to a French setting, of gaiety and romance. "The Two Vagabonds," a two act operetta, under the direction of Professors John Anderson and J. F. Catmull was one of the most successful activities of the year.12

On 9 May 1935 the sophomore or Varsity Drama produced Austin Strong's Seventh Heaven, by W. W. Jacobs and Louis N. Parker, just one week after The Monkey's Paw was presented by the dramatic club.13

1935 – 1936

Prof. Joseph Catmull, Ricks' capable dramatic coach, has selected the modern comedy-drama, "Big Hearted Herbert" as the Frosh play for this year. This is a popular stage play which has had an extended run on Broadway and other famous stages, and has also appeared at the local theatre starring Guy Kibbee.

The theme is universal, for everyone has seen or met somewhere a man of the "Big Hearted Herbert" type and longed to hold the mirror of reality before him. Herbert's success in business and his self confidence have turned him into a domestic autocrat who forgets that his children are no longer babies.14

Due to the success of Sophie Kerr and Anna Steese Richardson's Big Hearted Herbert that was presented in December, the cast was asked to perform it again 12 February 1936 for the Leadership Conference.15

Another event of the Leadership Conference was the performance of the Music Department's operetta.
"The Mikado" was very successfully produced by the music department in the school year of 1935-36 and has been acclaimed by the light opera followers as the most delightful and entertaining opera of the many which Gilbert and Sullivan have written. This musical comedy was presented to the students and guests who visited Ricks College during Leadership Week as well as the residents of Rexburg and neighboring communities.

... New scenery was made especially for this opera and of course contributed greatly to the material success of the opera. The costumes provided much color and the Japanese fans also added to color and actions which kept the movement of the opera continued throughout.16

The Dramatic Department sponsored a school assembly on 5 February 1936, in which they presented two scenes from Shakespeare's *Midsummer Nights Dream*.17 "The production received such appreciation that requests came from several sources for its repetition."18

[**Journey's End**] This greatest of all modern war plays showed the effect of war on a small group of British officers. It was intensely dramatic showing the tremendous strain of waiting. It showed how men's souls were tried in the great game of war. How men's characters were changed and altered by the tremendous tension and strain.

The setting of the play was a dugout on the front line with the Boche trenches only one hundred yards away. The appropriate sound effects—-the constant booming of big guns in the distance, and at intervals the shrill scream of the shells. The heavy boom of "Minnies," rifle-fire, all muffled by thick earthen walls of the dugout, lent a very realistic touch to the play and heightened the dramatic effect.

... Under the able direction of Professor Catmull the cast worked very hard and turned out one of the best plays ever produced by Ricks College.19

The dramatic club remained active during this season choosing to perform **Second Childhood**.

"Second Childhood" was a popular Broadway hit and has been successfully played all over the United States. It is entirely different from any other play presented at Ricks, and should furnish delightful variety. Coach Catmull, having had experience acting in this play, is well qualified to bring forth superb entertainment.20

The course catalogues are missing for the years 1933-34 and 1934-35, but in the 1935-36 catalogue Joseph Catmull was listed as head and only member of the speech department, with the following courses
offered: "Fundamentals of Speech, Speech Composition, Speech Analysis, Interpretation, Dialects, Play Production, and Stage Craft." 21

1936 - 1937

The Rixida of 1937 included photo sheets of three major productions for that year. The plays presented were *The Return of Peter Grimm*, *The Torchbearers*, by George Kelly, and *Death Takes A Holiday*, by Alberto Cassella. 22

The "Pirates of Penzance," a lilting Musical Comedy by the ever popular Gilbert and Sullivan, was the ambitious selection of the College Music Department this year. Its success was made possible by the wholehearted support of each member of the cast, chorus, orchestra, and the cooperation of various members of the college faculty.

...From all reports we feel that the opera was very successful, even surpassing past productions. 23

On Friday, March 19, the college was host to members of the Idaho-Oregon Speech Tournament. About seventy-five contestants and judges from five Idaho colleges were in attendance as our visitors. The schools represented were U.I.S.B., Albion, North West Nazarene, College of Nampa, College of Idaho from Caldwell, and Gooding College. Contestants from these schools entered all events, and Ricks entered all events except humorous reading.

In this conference the contests were judged by representative coaches from the schools participating, but no coach was permitted to judge one of his teams. Three of the schools were upper division or senior colleges, and three were lower division or junior colleges, but teams from both divisions debated together.

Ricks College won first place in every event they entered. . . .

A One-Act play, "Where the Cross Was Made," was presented by Ricks, and, although this was non-competitive, it won much favorable comment from visiting coaches. 24

At the close of this school year Joseph Catmull would take a year leave of absence and go to the University of Utah to pursue a Master of Science Degree. His replacement for those two years would be Harry Plummer.
The first plays of this season would be presented by members of the play production class.

The play production class is preparing two one-act plays for presentation before the end of this quarter. "Grandma Pulls the String" is a farce in one-act. . . . The other play is also a comedy. The cast for "The Nine Lives of Emily" is as follows: . . . 

The cast for "Nothing But the truth," a farce in three acts to be presented by the Freshman class, December 22, has been chosen by Professor Plummer, dramatic instructor.

"The tryouts revealed a lot of good dramatic ability," says Mr. Plummer. "Perhaps the cast chosen does not include the best dramatic talent, but the persons chosen seem best fitted for the parts in which they are cast."

. . . It is hoped that every student in school and especially the Freshmen will be as whole-heartedly behind the production as are members of the cast and director, Professor Plummer.

The varsity play Omigosh was presented 8 February 1938.

One of the greatest Leadership Week attractions was the annual Varsity Play which was presented in the college auditorium last night. The play, "Omigosh," a farce in three acts by Edwin Stanley, was directed by Harry Plummer, Professor of Speech at Ricks College.

A capacity crowd rocked with laughter at the hilariously funny predicaments of Senator Roger Meacham. . . .

Flamm and Company furnished the set for Senator Meacham's modern suburban home. This contribution to the play was deeply appreciated by all concerned. This is the second time this year that Flamm and Company have furnished furniture for Ricks College productions.

Joe Randall acted as property manager for the play and the Purple Key club as ushers.

The play was pronounced definitely a comedy hit and a great success by the many people who attended.

The college's dramatic club remained active during the absence of Professor Catmull. After paying tribute to Professor Catmull, an article in the Rixida yearbook goes on to say:

New members are chosen upon the basis of ability and interest in dramatics. Each year the club presents a three-act drama, besides several one-act plays.

This year, under the direction of Professor Harry Plummer, the club presented the three-act drama, "A Bill of Divorcement," April 21 for the general public, and April 28 for the visiting high school students.
Many interesting and entertaining parties were held. All the members feel that this year has been highly successful and that the Ricks College Dramatic Club has and will continue to bear a flaming torch for the school.28

1938 - 1939

Another Language by Rose Franken, was the freshman play chosen for the year. Directed by Professor Harry Plummer, the play performed 21 November 1938. "Reports say that the play, Another Language, was a grand success and several of Ricks' best actors and actresses are to be found in the freshman class."29

Gilbert and Sullivan's The Gondoliers was presented by the Music Department under the direction of Professor John Anderson on 13 and 14 February 1939.30

"The Double Door," a mystery drama which has been produced on stage and screen, was produced this year as the varsity play. The stage was set in the second story living-room of the Von Bret house, New York City, where Victoria Von Bret ruled her family with a maniac's firmness.31

Secrets behind the sinister shadows of the secret panel in the mysterious millionaire mansion of the von Bret's kept the audience which attended the drama "Double Door" on the edge of their seats in the Ricks College auditorium Wednesday night. The Play is being repeated again tonight [29 and 30 March 1939].32

The dramatic club presented No, No, a Thousand Times NO!, and was invited to several communities to perform again.33

An article in The Rexburg Journal updated the area residents concerning the activities of Professor Joseph Catmull.

Joseph F. Catmull, professor of speech at Ricks College who has been on leave of absence during the past two years, was the author of the play "Marriage by Reason," which had its premier showing at Kingsbury Hall, Salt Lake City, last Saturday evening. The play was produced and directed by the author. The production was a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of master of science. Mr. Catmull has held an instructorship for the past two years at the University of Utah while he has been working for his degree.

The setting for the play is in Yellowstone Park. During the summer months Mr. Catmull is employed as a Park naturalist.
Fig. 8. Joseph F. Catmull

Fig. 9. Catmull and Honorary Dramatic Club 1939-40.
Included in the cast were the former Ricks College students, Claire Likes, Richard Rasmussen and Mrs. Barbara Hegsted Rasmussen.

1939 - 1940

The Freshman play directed by the returning Professor Catmull was The Nut Farm, by John C. Brownell. The cast included DeWayne Sylvester, whose name is now easily recognized in the Upper Snake River Valley, as the station manager for K I D television, the CBS affiliate in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

The varsity play for this year was You Can't Take It With You, by Moss Hart and George Kaufman.

Ricks College dramatic department will present the annual Varsity play April 29 and 30 at the college auditorium, announces Joseph F. Catmull, head of the speech department. "You Can't Take It With You," by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman is the play selected for presentation, and the talented cast selected by Mr. Catmull promises to give an excellent performance. The play has a complicated and hilarious plot, showing the conflict between a happy-go-lucky carefree, but poor family and a precise, rich aristocratic family.

The Rixida contains a picture of the dramatic club of the year, but there is no specific information concerning their activities for this year.

1940 - 1941

This year was the first change in the curriculum offerings since 1933. The title of the department was changed from "Speech" to "Department of Speech" and two courses were dropped, Stage Craft and Speech Analysis, leaving Fundamentals of Speech, Speech Composition, Interpretation, Dialects, and Play Production.

FROSH PLAY CAST CHOSEN AFTER INTENSIVE COMPETITION

After many intensive hours of successive tryouts the cast for the Freshman play has been selected. Under the direction of
Professor Catmull, the major parts were chosen after a final tryout held last Wednesday, November 13.

... "Petticoat Fever," written by Mark Reed promises to be one of the outstanding events at Ricks this year. It is a farce in three acts and displays some of the cleverest humor he has ever seen according to Mr. Catmull. The scene is at a British Isle post in Labrador under the setting of the Northern Lights. Dascum, who has not seen a girl for many years suddenly comes in contact with one in this remote region of Labrador. Immediately things begin to happen. For further details, watch for the date of presentation and be sure to attend.

Mr. Catmull also stated that much fine talent was displayed, especially among the girls. Get behind these students and let's really put over a successful production.\(^{38}\)

**Petticoat Fever** was eventually staged on 29 and 30 January 1941.\(^ {39} \)

The operetta *H.M.S. Pinafore* by Gilbert and Sullivan was performed in March of 1941.

Production is under the direction of Professors John M. Anderson and Joseph Catmull, assuring an artistic and finished production. The student help consists of Darwin Christensen, business manager; Gordon Elliot, staging; and Kay Morris, concert master. The orchestra of 18 members will augment the production.

... The costumes are from Hillam Costume company in Salt Lake City and are of the 1820 period. They promise to be very colorful and will set off the show in proper style.\(^ {40} \)

Their earnest efforts and talents of the cast made the opera a successful performance. It also appeared at Sugar City and Rigby.\(^ {41} \)

The dramatic club produced John Willard's three-act melodrama *The Cat and the Canary,* "... and from all reports it was well received."\(^ {42} \)

**1941 - 1942**

The Freshman Class presented their class play, "What A Life." The play was a portrayal of Henry Aldrich in his many escapades. Produced by Joseph Catmull, the play was acclaimed a huge success. The play was presented on February 9 and 10.\(^ {43} \)
In November of 1941 the college was visited by three members of the Vern Slout Acting Company. The three presented a workshop for the benefit of the students.

Verne Slout and company presented a theatre workshop at the Ricks College auditorium Monday, November 10. The company consisted of three: Mr. Slout, Miss Ora Ackley, and E. A. McNutt. They conducted their performance in the form of an experimental workshop and presented three different types of drama: "Glass Houses" (light comedy), "Theater of the Air" (a popular type of radio program), and scenes from the "Taming of the Shrew."

Mr. Slout is a graduate of Albion College of Michigan and has had dramatic connections with the University of Michigan. As a hobby he writes and produces plays.

Mr. E. A. McNutt has just joined the company this season and loves the stage. He also has had other dramatic experience in stock, etc.

Miss Ora Ackley has been with Mr. Slout's company for five seasons and still isn't tired of the stage. She plays summer stock and has previously been in musicals.

They all three believe that stage productions are coming back through such movements as the "Little Theatre Movement."

The dramatic club was active again this year with new activities and purposes which were outlined in the Rixida of 1942.

The Dramatic Club was organized in 1935 for the purpose of being of service to other organizations and groups who want readings, skits, or even plays presented on their programs. This year the special talents of each member were indexed and a list was furnished to the faculty to be referred to for the composing of any program.

Qualifications for becoming a member of this club are:
Prospects must have had a leading part in one three-act play or in three one-act plays and must be passed on by the present members of the Dramatic Club.

In cooperation with the drama and play production class, the club presented this year as their annual play—"Wow! Some Baby!"

The school newspaper spoke of another activity of Professor Catmull and his students.

AMATEURS DE-DAUB THEMSELVES IN PLAY PRODUCTION CLASS

"Keep at least one finger clean" urged Professor Catmull as he watched his ambitious, but not ambidextrous amateurs bury themselves wrist deep in grease paint.

... This was a class in the principles of makeup, only part of the class activities of the Drama-Play Production class. They have just completed a thorough study of makeup from "straight" to "character," from greasepaint to nose putty and crepe hair. The
progress they made proves the advantages of a small, enthusiastic group over a classroom full of bored, untouched students.46

1942 - 1943

Starting off the dramatic season with a bang, Prof. Catmull has selected "Arsenic and Old Lace" as his first play of the year. In contrast with the times and to turn the thoughts of people away from the war, this hilarious comedy has been chosen. Gay and thrilling, this play has been one of the greatest hits of all time on Broadway. It was not released for amateur production until last month, and it is believed that the Ricks College presentation will be one of the first among amateur circles.

Brown of New York Post has said, "So side-splitting and terrific, it can be guaranteed to make even dramatic critics care for the theatre. Just when it is threatening to make you scream with terror, it compels you to scream with laughter." Anderson, of the Journal American, "Frightfully funny. A hilarious thriller that raises your hair and then the roof."

Although he didn't get the books until Tuesday, Professor Catmull has already held tryouts and partly organized the cast.

... Lynn Benson, who last spring won the award for giving the best dramatic reading in the state, and later won a contest with the same reading at Provo, in which representatives from six states appeared, is now showing up well at rehearsals.47

Lynn Benson is now the current chairman of the Theatre Department at Ricks College. Lynn Benson recalled:

I came to Ricks College for one quarter during World War II. Of course it started in December 1941, but I was not old enough at the time. I turned eighteen in September of 1942 and enlisted in the Navy in January 1943 and served in the Navy for three years.48

A play review in the Viking Scroll of Arsenic and Old Lace, by Joseph Kesselring, which performed on 1 and 3 December 1942, was highly complimentary of Professor Catmull and his work and went on to praise one actor in particular.

Of all the actors, Lynn Benson probably did the most consistently fine job of acting. With his first speech a few chuckles could be heard over the audience. These grew in volume until with his last speech it sounded as if there were an English bomber attack. Many remarks were heard as to how outstanding Benson was.49
The next play of the season Village Green, by Carl Allensworth, played on 15, 16 and 17 March 1943, and was performed by members of the drama and play production classes. Lynn Benson had been cast in this production but later joined the Navy.

The greatest blow to the play as yet was Lynn Benson's joining the Navy. Lynn was one of the best actors in the school, and his talent will be greatly missed in this presentation.\(^5\)

Gilbert and Sullivan's Patience was the operetta chosen for production by the Music Department this year, with performances on 1 and 3 March 1943. Professor John Anderson was in charge of the music, but no mention is made of Professor Catmull assisting him with the staging.\(^5\)

1943 - 1944

The available data concerning this school year reveals only one production that was staged. Letters to Lucerne, a play about a girls' school by Fritz Rotter and Allen Vincent, was chosen because most college age men were involved in World War II. The economic strains of the war could also be a contributing factor in the college's staging only one production.

Good news for everybody! The school play, "Letters to Lucerne," will be presented March 1 and 2 in the Ricks auditorium. The director, Mr. Catmull, believes the play will be well presented because the students of the cast have done well in preparing their parts. Two changes have been made in the originally announced cast. The changes are these: Garr Howell will play Koppier and Carl Neiwirth will play Hans.

The cast has been divided into groups or committees to perform the different duties that are necessary for a play production. Mary Tout and Margie Smith are in charge of the ticket selling and advertising. Gail Millward and Gretchen Johnson will be responsible for the programs. For property managers, there are Royal Meservy, Leah Belle Davidson, and Joanne Helleson. The scenery will be in charge of Mr. Catmull with the help of Gerald Christensen. The other members of the cast will be given other tasks to do, as further need for them occurs.
Tickets for this school activity will be on sale at the office in the near future. The prices will be as follows: Students, 25 cents; Adults, 40 cents; Children, 15 cents; 15 cents extra for reserved seats.

Let's all cooperate with the splendid cast and do some advertising to arouse interest and enthusiasm in the school and among the people of Rexburg and surrounding towns.

Remember, March 1 and 21^2

1944 - 1945

With Joseph Catmull taking a leave of absence to pursue a doctorate degree, the only event of a theatrical nature during this season was the visit of Jeanne Welty.

An unusual opportunity to see exceptionally fine dramatic entertainment will be offered by Ricks College Community Fine Arts association, when the organization presents Miss Jeanne Welty in her monodrama, "The Mystery of Theodosia Burr," on Wednesday February 28 at the Rexburg Stake tabernacle.

Miss Welty is recognized by critics as one of America's foremost exponents of the art of monodrama, and her performances throughout the country have been hailed by press and public alike.

The monodrama, as presented by Miss Welty, is an incorporation of the best features of the dramatic monologue together with the action and brilliant costuming of the legitimate theatre. Audiences thus get the effect of a regular stage play, though it is enacted by one person with a single voice carrying the entire dramatic action.

Miss Welty was starred in Max Reinhardt's California production of "The Miracle" and has played leading roles in many stock productions. She has studied with such famous teachers as Constance Collier, Francis Robinson-Duff, Isaac Grove, Ralph Bellamy.

Miss Welty writes as well as produces her own programs, thus appearing in the multiple role of designer, playwright, actress, and producer. Each of the programs represents months of intense research into the lives of the noted women she portrays with so much power and conviction.

Jeanne Welty was born in Lima, Ohio, the daughter of a lawyer and former congressman. She was educated at private schools in Lima, Cincinnati and Washington.

Service men and women in uniform will be admitted free.53

1945 - 1946

J. Harry Plummer is accredited with being the speech instructor this year in the Rixida, but for the second year in succession there
would not be any plays produced on the Ricks College campus. There was an appearance made by a professional dramatist as part of a fine arts series.

The fifth number in the current series of Ricks College Community Fine Arts course will be held on Monday, Feb. 18. Miss Marjorie Moffett will present a balanced program, partly made up of her own compositions. This performer has won a national reputation for her adeptness in portraying humorous and tragic characters. Her sketch of Marie Curie has been called a work of genius.

In the present tour, Miss Moffett will play nearly one hundred cities. She works effectively on bare stages which she illuminates by her power of description and imagery.

The following program will be given: "A Letter From a Chinese Guerrilla Fighter's Wife," "A Movie Star's Life is Very Triste," or "Is All This Publicity Necessary?" "Cheerful Little Earful," "Selling Hardware is Very Hard," "Marie Curie,"—The scene is the study of the Curie home, Boulevard Kellermann, Paris, "It is April 1906." Intermission.

"An English Lady's Impression of America," "A Debutante or Glamour Girl, No. 238," "The Children's Pilgrimage."54

Two newspaper articles related some of the activities of Professor Catmull while on leave at the University of Minnesota. The first was printed in the Deseret News and then reprinted in the school paper.

Professor Joseph F. Catmull was recently featured as King Lear in the annual Shakespeare production at the University of Minnesota. The Play was the most elaborate ever given by the campus Little Theatre groups. A production staff of 75 was required to execute the detail in seven performances held early in March. The make-up on King Lear alone required two hours' time.

Prof. Catmull's presentation of the celebrated character won much acclaim. Away on sabbatical leave from Ricks College, Professor Catmull is charged with the production of several plays. He is also enrolled in a number of graduate courses. He will return to the Ricks speech department next fall, according to President John L. Clarke.55

The second article made reference to Professor Catmull's involvement with a production of Eugene O'Neill's Ah, Wilderness.56

John L. Clarke, who was president of the college at the time, referred to Joseph Catmull as a "great actor."
I came in 1944. The head of the department, and only member of the department, was Joseph Catmull. He was not only a great director from my point of view, but he was a great actor himself. He was especially good with Shakespeare.

Shortly after I got here Joe left on a leave of absence to try to get his doctorate degree at the University of Minnesota. In fact we lived in his home up there on second south while he was gone. He came back . . . but the University of Utah was after him and they could pay so much more than we could that he moved away. That isn't the truth. I think the salaries are a little more comparable, but down there, every year, Joe took the leading role in one of their Shakespearean productions. He loved that kind of thing. I think you could use the word great. He was a great actor. As well as he had a lot of following with the students. They liked him, as well as being a good director.57

1946 - 1947

Professor Catmull returned to Ricks College from the University of Minnesota and announced the first play of the season in the Viking Scroll.

"Blithe Spirit," by Noel Coward, will be the school play this year", announced Prof. Joseph Catmull today. He said that due to the lack of facilities this year the play will be presented as a drawing room rather than on the stage. This play is a farce with an incongruous and complicated plot.

... Prof. Catmull is as yet unacquainted with those that are dramatically talented and is now seeking talent. He especially requests that anyone in the student body with dramatic talent who is interested in the play to let him know. Tryouts for the play will be arranged.

All presentations of the play will be private, but it is planned that there will be enough presentations to enable all members of the student body to attend.

If this play proves to be successful another play may be attempted in the Spring quarter.

Also the play production class will be producing original plays this year and the better ones may be presented to the student body. The date of the school play has been tentatively set for the month of February.58

Whether or not this planned play was ever actually produced is not clear. The yearbook for this year makes no reference to any dramatic production. It is possible, however, that the play was performed in "private" performances and no record kept of where and when.
Lynn Benson, who was a student of theatre at Ricks in 1946 and 1947, stated that there were no productions mounted at Ricks that year. This would lead one to assume that the projected production of *Blithe Spirit* did not occur.

**1947 - 1948**

With the departure of Joseph Catmull in the spring of 1947, the college was left with a vacancy in the Department of Speech that was not to be filled until the 1948-49 school year.

The only play produced on campus this year was presented by the staff of the *Viking Scroll*.

CAST NEARLY COMPLETE FOR FEBRUARY FUN OF NEGRO FARCE "COME SEVEN"

"Indications are that we will be able to present an outstanding performance" was the comment made today by William O'Donnell, editor of the Viking Scroll, as he announced the cast for the play, "Come Seven" by Octavus Roy Cohen which will be presented February 4, 5, and 6.

The play, being produced by the Scroll to raise funds, is the first dramatic production presented by Ricks College since 1944, when this play was produced in Ririe by Mr. O'Donnell's dramatics class.

With no instructor of speech or drama, and no stage facility, 1947-48 would signal the end of the Joseph Catmull era in theatre at Ricks College.
NOTES

1. Ricks College yearbook, Rixida, 1934.

2. Ibid., 1947.


5. Ibid.

6. Ricks College yearbook, Rixida, 1934.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., 1935.


11. Ibid.


13. Ibid.


15. Ibid., 11 February 1936.

16. Ricks College yearbook, Rixida, 1936.


18. Ricks College yearbook, Rixida, 1936.

19. Ibid.
1936.

20Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, The Purple Flash, 13 April 1936.

21Ricks College Course Catalogue, 1935-36.

22Ricks College yearbook, Rixida, 1937.

23Ibid., p. 40.

24Ibid., p. 34.

25Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Flash, October 1937.

26Ibid., 24 November 1937.

27Ibid., 9 February 1938.

28Ricks College yearbook, Rixida, 1938, p. 42-43.

29Rexburg (Idaho), Rexburg Journal, 22 November 1938.

30Ibid., 17 January 1939.

31Ricks College yearbook, Rixida, 1939, p. 51.

32Rexburg (Idaho), Rexburg Journal, 30 March 1939.

33Ricks College yearbook, Rixida, 1939, p. 55.

34Rexburg (Idaho), Rexburg Journal, 18 May 1939.

35Ricks College yearbook, Rixida, 1940.

36Rexburg (Idaho), Rexburg Journal, 25 April 1940.

37Ricks College Course Catalogue, 1940-41.

38Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 20 November 1940.

39Ricks College yearbook, Rixida, 1941.

40Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 5 March 1941.

41Ricks College yearbook, Rixida, 1941.

42Ibid., p. 53.

43Ibid., 1942, p. 47.

44Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 25 November 1941.

45Ricks College yearbook, Rixida, 1942, pp. 48-49.
46Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 8 December 1941.

47Ibid., 17 November 1942.


49Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 22 December 1942.

50Ibid., 9 February 1943.

51Ricks College yearbook, Rixida, 1943.

52Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 18 February 1944.

53Presidents Scrapbook, Ricks College, 1945.

54Ibid., 1946.

55Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 15 March 1946.

56Presidents Scrapbook, Ricks College, 1946.

57President John L. Clarke, interviewed in his home, Rexburg, Idaho, 5 January 1982.

58Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 6 November 1946.

59Lynn Benson, telephone interview from Springville, Utah to his home in Rexburg, Idaho, 18 February 1982.

60Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 10 December 1947.
Fig. 10. William Clayton Kauffman.
CHAPTER VI

WILLIAM C. KAUFFMAN

William Clayton Kauffman (Fig. 10) came to Ricks College during the summer session of 1948. He came to a school that had no theatre facility and a theatre program that had ceased to exist. John L. Clarke, former Ricks College president, recalled with fondness his memory of Professor Kauffman.

Now there's a man, if there was ever a Saint; if a theatre man is a Saint, there's one right there. . . . I had known him from Thatcher, Arizona. He was the theatre man at the little "Uma" college it was called then; it is now Eastern Arizona College. I had been down there as head of the Institute of Religion. I got to know him quite well and liked him. He was a convert to the Church. He moved from there and became the head of the drama department at Occidental College, in a suburb of Los Angeles, a private school, but well recognized.

I remember making a trip down there to see him and talk him into coming up here. He didn't have a thing to work with; just kind of a promise telling him there would be some things done. He never saw them. I wouldn't have blamed him if he had said we can't do any plays. We haven't got anything to put them on with. . . . But here's a man who didn't say no, or give up. He made the best of what he had. I look at some of the plays and some of them were certainly not the top notch plays of the time, but they were fun and well done; that's my point. He used a lot of students. He gave those kids some real responsibilities and carried on a good program.1

1948 - 1949

William C. Kauffman, professor of speech at Occidental College at Los Angeles, has been appointed head of the speech department at Ricks College, it was announced today by John L. Clarke, President. Prof. Kauffman will be a member of the Ricks College instructional staff for the second term of the annual 1948 summer school which begins June 14, said Pres. Clarke.

He will teach social psychology, beginning speech and interpretation during the second term of summer school, Pres. Clarke added.
Prof. Kauffman holds a bachelor of science degree which he received from the University of Southern California at Los Angeles in 1930 and a master of arts degree which he received from the same school in 1931.

He has had 15 years of teaching experience in teaching speech and in radio broadcasting. He taught at Gila Junior College at Gila, Arizona, from 1933 to 1945 and at Occidental College from 1945 to the present.

Professor Kauffman wasted no time in organizing the new "Speech and Drama" department at the college, offering the following courses for the 1948-49 academic school year.

- Fundamentals of Speech
- Oral Interpretation
- Play Production
- Private Instruction in Dramatic and Interpretive Reading
- Radio Broadcasting
- Radio Broadcasting Workshop
- Advanced Oral Interpretation
- Play Direction
- Advanced Private Instruction in Dramatic and Interpretive Reading
- Religious Drama
- Religious Pageantry

A full program of drama and drama activity will be carried out this year after a period of comparative inactivity during the war, it was announced today by Prof. William C. Kauffman, head of the Speech Department.

No plays or dramas have been produced at Ricks since early in the war and no classes have been conducted in drama production. Prof. Kauffman has just joined the Ricks College faculty after serving as head of the speech and drama department at Occidental College at Los Angeles.

In preparation for the producing of plays, Prof. Kauffman will teach classes in the fundamentals of play production in which stage craft and acting and directing will be emphasized.

In addition, a full schedule of plays is being planned and the exact dates will be announced later, said Prof. Kauffman.

With no theatre facility at his disposal, Professor Kauffman used the combination music room to stage his productions in arena fashion. Kay Wilkins, a former Ricks college student and current faculty member, described the performance area.

They had a large combination room. On one side were the combination risers for band and orchestra, and on the other side of the
room were permanent seats for the choir. So all the music groups were in that same room (Figs. 11-12).

We sandwiched our dramatic productions between that. We utilized the stage area when necessary, but usually we seated on both sides. We seated on the symphony-band side we put seats over there temporarily, and then the permanent seats on the other side. I think there were three or four levels of seats on the sides with the acting in between... It really was a music room we borrowed for drama. If you went clear through the room there was another practice room on the other side, and if you went through that room clear to the back corner there was a little student union room. So entrances and exits were done on that side of the room.  

The first plays to be performed in this space were five one-acts directed by Professor Kauffman that premiered the college's rebirth of theatre and the new name given to the acting space and actors.

Permission has been granted the Ricks College classroom theater to use the name "Play Mill," it was announced today by William C. Kauffman, head of the Speech Department.

Permission was given to the theater by Guernsey F. LePelly, playwright and artist and former student of Mr. Kauffman's, said Mr. Kauffman.

Mr. Kauffman's classroom experimental theater in Los Angeles on the Occidental College campus was also named the "Play Mill" and graduates of the department agreed that whenever possible future theatres would be known by this title, the aim being a considerable number of Play Mills.

Five short plays to be produced by this theater have been scheduled for Nov. 11, 12, and 13, Mr. Kauffman said.

The five plays presented were, Five Minutes from the Station, It Happens Every Day, Nobody Sleeps, by Guernsey LePelley, The Blue Tie, and Study Number 1. Assisting Mr. Kauffman with the staging was a student, Lyle Watson.

Lyle Watson had been a student of Professor Kauffman's at Gila College in Arizona, before he went into the Navy, and later on a two year proselyting mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In a telephone interview with Lyle Watson on 30 January 1982, he related the following information.

The director of theatre at this time was Bill Kauffman. While he was at Ricks he corresponded with me while in the service and on my mission. He persuaded me to come to Idaho to finish my college
Fig. 11. Playmill in gym building, facing choir seats.

Fig. 12. Playmill in gym building, facing orchestra seats.
education there. The first year I came to Ricks it was a three year college. My junior year at Ricks it became a four year school, so I was a four year graduate of Ricks College. I was also president of the student body during my senior year. . . .

Bill Kauffman was a good person. He did very fine in theatre. I thought a lot of Bill Kauffman. He had a lot of dedication, a man that really got into his work. Of course at his years at Ricks college, he had setbacks with his health, but he gave it his all right up until the very last. I tried to assist him as much as I could as a student. 11

Professor Kauffman's health problems were heart related. In January of 1949 he suffered a heart attack during a morning class he was teaching.

Professor William C. Kauffman, head of the Ricks College speech and drama departments, is reported speedily recovering from a heart attack suffered during his first period class last Wednesday. He will be absent from regular class and school activities, however, for the remainder of the week.

Lyle Watson, student drama director and speech major, is ably substituting as speech professor during the untimely absence of Prof. Kauffman. 12

Lyle Watson was chosen to substitute for Professor Kauffman because of his active involvement in the school's drama program. In a review of Patterson Greene's Papa Is All, a play performed by the Play Mill Players in December of 1948, one month before Professor Kauffman's heart attack, Lyle Watson was praised for his contributions to the show.

Lyle Watson of Thatcher, Arizona, gave a good reading of the part of the State Trooper and deserves a great deal of credit for his excellent work in the capacity of associate director, make-up artist, technical head, and art man. 13

Lyle Watson's involvement with the theatre department as a student and his serving as student body president during his senior year were major reasons for his eventual appointment to the theatre faculty in 1957. 14

Within a month of his heart attack Professor Kauffman was back at work getting things moving on the next production of The Hill Between.
Players of the Ricks College Play Mill are conducting a search for properties needed in the production "The Hill Between," which is scheduled to be shown on February 15, it was announced today by William C. Kauffman, director of the production.

A dinner horn, an old rocking chair, four very old kitchen chairs and a crockery or wooden churn with a dasher permitting up and down movement are needed for realistic effects, said Prof. Kauffman.

REWARD OFFERED
The reward for the finding of these properties will be the general admission tickets for an entire family furnishing the group of properties needed or a single reserved ticket for one of the items needed, continued Prof. Kauffman...

The production will be produced at the Rexburg Stake Tabernacle.15

The fourth production staged this year was The Late Christopher Bean, by Sidney Howard, in April 1949.

Selection of cast members has been completed and rehearsals are well underway for the fourth play mill production, "The Late Christopher Bean," a three-act comedy to be produced April 28, 29, and 30 in the College play mill.

Again using central staging Professor Kauffman, director-producer, has increased the comfort of his audience by limiting the seating capacity to 160 seats and placing them all on the reserved list. Ticket prices to off campus sales are 80 cents. Students will be admitted on presentation of student activity cards.16

Professor Kauffman arranged for the college's first radio program on 20 October 1948. It was entitled "A Visit to the Vikings" and was aired through the facilities of K I D radio in Idaho Falls.17

Though the college had offered a summer school for some time, it was not until Professor Kauffman that theatre-related courses were available in the summer.

Six weeks of play production study will be held at Ricks College from June 6 to July 15 in their first annual summer theater, it was announced Thursday by William C. Kauffman, director of the theater.

Students wishing to train in such a field can earn from 3 to 9 hours of credit, and students majoring in some other field may also participate, said Mr. Kauffman.

Three courses are included. They are: Acting Techniques; Direction of Plays; and Technical Problems in Lighting, Make-up, Scenery. Each of these courses carries three college credit hours, Mr. Kauffman said.18
1949 - 1950

The first production of the new school year was The Sap, written by William A. Grew, which performed 10, 11, and 12 November 1949. A review of the play in the Viking Scroll lists all those individuals involved with the production and demonstrates how Professor Kauffman would involve and give responsibility to many of his students.

Assisting the directors William C. Kauffman and Lyle Watson, were LaRae Pickett of Ammon and Ted Wright of Twin Falls. Others on the production staff were Donna Williams, script secretary; Zane Hall, electrician; Edna Mae Wheelwright, Makeup; Norman Bowen and Jeanine Drake, crew; Annette Armstrong, Gayle Pickett and Norma Jean Weaver, properties; Beth Gardner and Marilyn McEntire, programs; ushering, the Valkyries; Doormen, Intercollegiate Knights; Billie Jean Jarrell, publicity; Jocelyn Beckstead, Anita Clement and Gladys Moulton, assistants; Edith Drake and Marjorie Ricks, ticket sales; Kenneth Doty, newspaper representative; and engineer, Stanley Beus.

An all girls' play was next produced in February of 1950.

Completion of casting for the dramatic feature of the annual Ricks College Leadership program set for February 14-16 was announced this week by Professor William C. Kauffman, head of the drama department.

Featuring an entire female cast and the unusual three sectional setting in central staging, the Ricks College Play Mill will present "The Young and Fair," a play in three acts by N. Richard Nash. . . .

The Play Mill staff will again assist Prof. Kauffman with the staging of this unusual script which involves the use of a three sectional setting that represents an office, a hall, and a bedroom. Lyle Watson, Thatcher, Arizona, co-director; LaRae Pickett, Ammon, associate director; and Ted Wright, Twin Falls, handles the technical problems of lighting and staging.

The drama department continued to further develop broadcasting as an area of study with another production, Viking Caravan, that was broadcast over the facilities of K I D radio every other week.

The Swan was presented in early spring in observance of International Theatre month.

"The Swan," a romantic comedy in three acts, will be presented in Rexburg on March 29-30 and April 1, at the Play Mill theatre by the Ricks College Play Mill Players in observance of the International Theatre month. The theatre observance month was
launched last year with the idea of promoting international good will and emphasizing those elements within a nation or individual which will build toward a better world.

The play, originally written in the Hungarian language, was translated for English production by Melville P. Baker.^{23}

Casting for the new play, "Mr. Vincent," to be produced in the Ricks College Play Mill April 26 and 27, was completed Thursday by Professor William C. Kauffman, head of the college drama department and his student associates, Ted Wright and Norman Bowen. . . .

"Mr. Vincent," a long-short play in one scene, is written by Mari Beck and is being tested by the Ricks College Play Mill. Leon Owen Snook, head of the Rowe Peterson company selected Ricks as the school to do the premier performance of "Mr. Vincent."

Professor Kauffman believes that the play will be exceptionally interesting to the audience as it will permit them to see the players actually create the roles.^{24}

During his second year at the college, Mr. Kauffman organized a regional theatre group known as the Upper Snake River Valley Players.^{25} Members of this group participated in the college's productions, and in turn many college students or Play Mill Players participated in plays produced by the Upper Snake River Valley Players.

The final play to be presented during the year is being produced by the Upper Snake River Valley Players, under the direction of Bill O'Donnell. The production, "The Survivors," will be presented in the Play Mill during May 24 to 27.^{26}

Mr. Vincent was not the only play to have its premier at Ricks College this year. The summer school presented another original play, Wail in the Wind.

Play Mill players and dramatists of the Upper Snake River Valley players will be creating new roles in the production, "Wail in the Wind," a comedy-drama in three acts by Elizabeth Bergvall Hellier when it goes into its premier production by the Ricks College Summer Theatre August 9, 10 and 11.

The playwright, already successful as a writer for both the stage and novel, has written and produced many plays of a religious nature. She is a personal friend of the producer, William Clayton Kauffman, head of the Ricks College speech-drama department.^{27}

Another play produced this summer was Forward the Heart, written by Bernard Reines and performed in the Play Mill on 13, 14 and 15 July 1950.^{28}
Activity remained at a high level this year with the establishment of a touring theatre company.

Speech Education at Ricks College includes the touring company. During the fall quarter, "Sun Up" played five out of town engagements, after two performances in Rexburg.

Three one-act plays were kept "on the road" during the year, and spring quarter found plans being made to tour with "Open Door." The three one-act plays that toured were, Study Number One, Gander Sauce, and Sound of Fury. The Rixida stated, "These three plays, together with various other entertainments, played nearly a score of times."30

As the college grew to its four-year status, so did the Speech and Drama Department grow in curriculum offerings. The 1950-51 course catalogue listed the following classes.

- Fundamentals of Speech
- Beginning Voice and Diction
- Voice Training
- Oral Interpretation
- Interpretation Problems
- Introduction to the Theatre
- Theory and Principles of Acting
- Problems in Play Production
- Persuasion
- Private Instruction in Dramatic and Interpretive Reading
- Introduction to Radio Broadcasting
- Dramatic Rehearsal and Performance
- Advanced Oral Interpretation
- Play Direction
- Summer Play Production Practice
- Dramatic Rehearsal and Performance Workshop
- Radio Announcing
- Radio Production and Direction
- Radio Writing
- History of the Theatre
- Teaching Problems
- Modern American Drama
- Senior Recital

On 14, 15 and 16 December Professor Kauffman directed the Ricks College Players and members of the Upper Snake River Valley Players in a Play Mill production of I Remember Mama, by John Van Druten.32
The next play produced was *Years Ago*, by Ruth Gordon, which played 15, 16, and 17 February 1951.33

Nine talented players and a feline named Punk held the attention of a capacity Play Mill audience Thursday night as the annual Leadership activities made a splendid opening. "Years Ago," an interestingly written three-act comedy drama, told of Ruth Gordon's own struggle to get a start on the Broadway stage.34

The play chosen for performance in observance of International Theatre Month was *Cradle of Glory*.

The cast for the Play Mill production, "Cradle of Glory," was announced today by Prof. William C. Kauffman, head of the Ricks College speech department. The play will be presented March 29, 30, and 31. "Cradle of Glory" is the story of the early years of Abraham Lincoln's life in Indiana. The show was chosen by director Kauffman to represent International Theatre Month on the Ricks campus. . . . The play, written by Marie McNett of Williamstown, Mass., will be the first "West of the Rockies" showing. Earlier performances have been given in Michigan, added the director.35

The final play of the season was an original written and directed by Bill O'Donnell entitled, *Open Door*. It played in the Play Mill on 18 and 19 May 1951.36

1951 - 1952

The first production of the Ricks College Play Mill theatre will be another noted "first," "To Blush Unseen." The three-act comedy was written by Guernsey Le Pelly, a former student of Prof. William Clayton Kauffman. The play will receive its first showing at Ricks College some time in November, according to Prof. Kauffman. . . .

The new play has not yet been published but royalties have been bought by Baker Publishing Co. . . . During the past four years the Play Mill theatre has built a reputation for outstanding plays and actors. Many students have become interested in drama for the first time, while at Ricks.37

Three one-act plays were performed by members of the dramatic rehearsal and performance class. They were mounted as term projects, and then given public performances. The plays were *When Shakespeare's Ladies Meet*, written by Charles George, *It's Life*, and *Gander Sauce.*38
To Blush Unseen was presented 2 February 1952 "to a very appreciative audience at Goshen," a small community south of Idaho Falls.

Under the direction of Professor Kauffman the department was involved in performing many plays in premier performances, as well as experimenting in other areas of theatre, as the following article relates.

If you've noticed the busy buzz of the drama department, you've probably wondered what kind of a bee they've got in their bonnet. The fact is, they have a right to buzz about their accomplishments.

In November of last year, they were the first to put on the performance of playwright Guernsey Le Pelley's new play, "To Blush Unseen." The play was a big success at Ricks, and the department plans to take it to Shelley sometime in February.

Two speech classes, six and 21, have the opportunity of coming out with another "first." They are producing the play, "The Sale," by Martin Field. This play first appeared in short story form in the July, 1948, issue of the Women's Home Companion. It has an interesting plot, and the speech classes are enjoying their work on it.

The third "first" is quite remarkable. The drama department is doing the reading of a play. This reading is to be recorded and sent to the Play-Wright, where it will be contested against other readings of the same play. Attendance to the reading will be by invitation from either the cast members or the director's staff.

Be sure and watch to see what happens to this rather secretive "first."

As if these firsts aren't enough to keep the department hopping, they are now hard at work on their leadership play, "The Queen's Husband."

Another original play was next on the agenda of performances at the college. The Settlement, written by John S. Fullmer of Rexburg, was directed by a student of Kauffman's, Nathan Smith. The play dealt with pioneers and the early development of the West.

In mid-March a long-awaited announcement finally came to Ricks College. A new chapel-auditorium was to be built on the campus of Ricks College, offering again a facility in which to stage major productions. "The chapel-auditorium will be complete with stage facilities and will
be suitable for the production of plays, operas, the fine arts series and leadership programs."^42

When Professor Kauffman came to Ricks College, he had been promised that such a facility would soon be his to work in.^43 But such a privilege would not be his. One month after the building was announced, Professor Kauffman passed away with a fatal heart attack. He had been to a General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City and was headed home to Idaho when the attack came.44

Professor Kauffman died Tuesday at 11 a.m. in a Salt Lake City hospital of a heart ailment. He was stricken Sunday.

He was born July 22, 1908, at Clyde, Kansas, a son of Clayton and Aura Page Kauffman. He married Norma Jean Hamblin, August 24, 1942.

Professor Kauffman was educated in Long Beach and Hemet, California. He later studied at Northwestern University, Wisconsin College of Music and the University of Southern California.

Professor Kauffman held a bachelor of science degree which he received from the University of Southern California at Los Angeles in 1930 and a master of arts degree received from the same school in 1931.

He joined the Ricks College faculty June 14, 1948. He had taught at Gila Junior College, Gila, Arizona, from 1933 to 1945 and at Occidental College, Los Angeles, where he was head of the speech department before coming to Ricks.

... Professor Kauffman was a member of the Rexburg Rotary Club and was formerly a Rotarian in Arizona. He was associated with the Upper Snake River Valley Players and was a member of the National Collegiate Players.45

There are several printed eulogies to Professor Kauffman -- the yearbook, the school paper -- but perhaps the most meaningful comes from John L. Clarke thirty years after the passing of Bill Kauffman.

Bill Kauffman was willing to come and give these kids a beautiful exposure and experience, willing to let them be in charge of things, and he expected them to be responsible, too. The kids loved him; they just loved him.46

The final production of the year was Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest.
The play which was to be co-directed by Professor Kauffman and Prof. Monson will be presented May 16 and 17. Assisting Prof. Monson are Helen Evans and Marjorie Ricks, student directors.
NOTES

1President John L. Clarke, interviewed in his home, Rexburg, Idaho, 5 January 1982.

2Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 2 June 1948.

3Ricks College Course Catalogue, 1948-49.

4Ibid.

5Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 21 September 1948.


7Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 12 October 1948.

8Ibid.

9Ibid., 16 November 1948.

10Lyle Watson, telephone interview to his home in Mesa, Arizona, 30 January 1982.

11Ibid.

12Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 11 January 1949.

13Ibid., 21 December 1948.


16Ibid., 15 March 1949.

17Ibid., 26 October 1948.

18Ibid., 15 March 1949.

19Ibid., 15 November 1949.
Ibid.

Ibid., 10 January 1950.

Ibid., 17 January 1950.

Presidents Scrapbook, Ricks College, 1950.

Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 18 April 1950.


Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 10 May 1950.

Ibid., 22 July 1950.

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Ricks College yearbook, Rixida, 1951.

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Ricks College Course Catalogue, 1950-51.

Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 5 December 1950.

Ricks College yearbook, Rixida, 1951.

Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 27 February 1951.

Ibid., 21 March 1951.

Ibid., 8 May 1951.

Ibid., 14 September 1951.

Ibid., 31 October 1951.

Ibid., 12 February 1952.

Ibid., 15 January 1952.

Ibid., 11 March 1952.

Ibid., 18 March 1952.


Ibid.

Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 22 April 1952.
Fig. 13. Aaron A. Roylance
CHAPTER VII

AARON A. ROYLANCE

1952 - 1953

Aaron Roylance (Fig. 13) came to Ricks College in the fall of 1952 to replace William Kauffman as head of the speech and drama department. Roylance held a master of fine arts degree from the University of Utah, which he received in 1948.1

The first play directed by Aaron Roylance at Ricks College was Fred Ballard's Ladies of the Jury.

Final assignments have been made for the play "Ladies of the Jury," which will be presented in the Ricks College Playmill October 30, 31 and November 1. Helen Evans has been chosen as assistant director to Professor Roylance.2

It might be noted in the previous article the spelling of the theatre's name, "Playmill." Before this year the name was two separate words, "Play Mill," but the single word spelling is used in all printed data from this time on.

Professor Roylance followed the example of Professor Kauffman and continued working with the Upper Snake River Valley Players to produce community productions.

"The Robe," by Lloyd C. Douglas, will be presented as one of the features of the Ricks College Leadership Week, according to Prof. Aaron A. Roylance, speech-drama head.

... The play will be presented in the Rexburg Stake Tabernacle.

This will be the first Ricks-Community play production of the season and will be presented on December 17 and 18.3
In January of 1953, You and I, a three-act comedy, was directed by Mrs. Wilma Bean and dedicated to the memory of William Kauffman.

Tomorrow night marks the opening performance of "You and I," a three-act comedy, to be presented in the Ricks Playmill.

The comedy by Phillip Barry is under the direction of Mrs. Wilma Bean and will run four days. Evening presentations start at 8:15 and will be held tomorrow, Thursday and Saturday, and a matinee is scheduled for 4:15 Friday.

The performance is being dedicated to the late Prof. William C. Kauffman. It was one of his favorite plays by Mr. Barry, and he requested that Mrs. Bean direct it last year.

Sutton Vane's Outward Bound was the second show directed at Ricks by Professor Roylance. The Playmill production played 12, 13, and 14 February 1953, with Helen Evans and Beverly Brown serving as assistant directors.

The drama club presented two one-act plays that were directed by student members. Thirst was directed by Beverly Brown with Dallus Jordan assisting, and Carol Waddoups and Dell Taylor co-directed Two Can Play.

In March the Upper Valley Players joined with the College Players to produce two evenings of one-acts. Professor Roylance directed Chekhov's The Boor, and Mrs. Anna Grover directed Mary Carolyn Davies' The Slave With Two Faces. These two plays and the two directed by the drama club were presented to the public on 26 and 28 March 1953.

On 23, 24, and 25 April 1953, A. A. Milne's Mr. Pim Passes By was presented at the Playmill.

"Mr. Pim Passes By," by A. A. Milne, the Ricks College spring quartet play, will be presented Thursday, Friday, and Saturday in the Playmill.

A matinee is scheduled for Thursday at 4:15 and an evening performance at 8:15 for the Friday and Saturday performances.
Prof. Aaron Roylance is directing the drama with Helen Evans and Beverly Brown acting as assistants.

"Father of the Bride," a three act comedy based on one of the most successful novels published recently, will be the last play of the Upper Valley Players and Ricks College Theatre this season. It is scheduled for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday in the Playmill. All evening performances have a curtain time of 8:15 with the Thursday matinee starting at 4:15.

Mrs. Cloda Bird is directing this final play of the season. Muriel Malphurs is prompter, Sharlene Thomas has been assigned makeup, Lynn Crofts, properties, and Wells Grover, publicity and business.

1953 - 1954

The first play of the season was a joint effort of the Upper Valley Players and the college.

The Upper Valley Players and Ricks College Theatre have scheduled another season of great plays opening the 1953-54 run with the "Night of January 16th," by Ayn Rand. This unique Broadway hit is slated for September 30 and October 1 under the direction of Roland Weiser, Rexburg businessman.

Mr. Weiser and cast are now in rehearsal of this court trial mystery. Probably the most outstanding features that have marked this play a success is the fact that it will not be produced on stage but will actually take place in the Madison county courthouse.

Twelve important members of the cast will not be chosen until the night of the performance, but they, fortunately, need no rehearsing. They are the jury, who will listen to the evidence and render the verdict that will determine which of the endings written for the play will be used.

In November Professor Roylance directed Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors, in the Playmill arena. This was the first Shakespearean play performed at the college since 1915-16, when Mary Merkley produced and directed As You Like It.

The Curious Savage, by John Patrick, was presented 5 and 6 February 1954. The following article relates how many of the students involved with drama productions were majoring in other fields of study.

Kent Marler, a junior who transferred from I.S.C., is a concert pianist. Anyway, he might have been except for some terrible happenings in his life, which you'll learn more about when you see
"The Curious Savage," February fifth or sixth. Kent is majoring in speech and radio and spends a lot of time writing modern short stories. Marler isn't the only artist in the play, however.

Mrs. Paddy, played by Helen Evans, is a real paint and brush artist (on stage) who hates electricity. Helen, a senior, is majoring in humanities and education and may be remembered as the familiar figure in the bookstore. Along with her part in the play, Helen is assisting the director in his work. These outstanding artists are only a few of the many in the play, "Curious Savage."

Hannibal, portrayed by Jon Perry, plays the violin. You would never believe he has only been at it a year after you hear him play. Jon is a freshman majoring in speech and drama.

Jay McDonald, while not cast as an artist, is one of the top notch art students attending Ricks. Jay is cast as Samuel Savage, a judge of distinction, the brother of Senator Savage and Lily Belle.

Titus, the senator, is enacted by Steve Neilson, a junior majoring in education. Steve is married and occupies an apartment at College Heights.

Lily Belle, a very highstrung, emotional individual, is played by Carol Waddoups. Carol is a junior majoring in English and Speech.

The only living parent of the three is Mrs. Ethel P. Savage, played by Dee Berrett.

Dee is a sophomore whose major is home economics. She is active in several clubs on the campus, including Valkyries and being president of the Chi's.

Playing Dr. Emmett and Miss Willie are Ray Griggs and Sarah Hutchinson, respectively. Ray is a senior whose major is biological science, while Sarah is a sophomore working on elementary education.

The lady guests at the "Cloisters" are played by JoBeth Shipley, a freshman vocal major playing Fairy May, and Verda Edstrom, a freshman majoring in secretarial science. She plays Florence.

Also assisting the director under the title of student director is Beverly Brow. Bev is a senior speech and drama major, who has had lots of experience in college plays and is most valuable in aiding Professor Roylance in what promises to be a play worth seeing.

In March of 1954 Roylance was appointed head of the Language Arts Department, as well as maintaining his role of Speech and Drama head.

Prof. Aaron A. Roylance has been appointed head of the Department of Language Arts by President John L. Clarke. The position has been vacant since the death of Prof. William C. Kauffman, former drama director at Ricks.

Prof. Roylance has been teaching at Ricks for two years. He is a former Weber College student and also studied at the Utah State
Agricultural College before entering the army. After a successful army career where he was listed by the War Department as "key personnel," he began his teaching career at Washington Terrace Junior High School in Ogden, Utah.

He attended the University of Utah where he received his bachelor's degree in 1947 and his masters in 1948. While at the university, he was stage carpenter and stage electrician. He also had charge of the installation and operation of the lighting for the summer festival productions at the Univ. of Utah. These productions included the production of "The Promised Valley," the centennial play.

He also handled the lighting for Orson Welles when he came to Salt Lake City to produce "Macbeth." Roylance aided in designing the lighting system that is now being used in Kingsbury Hall on the University of Utah campus.

Roylance headed the speech department at Carbon College for two years and then fulfilled a part time mission in Joplin, Missouri.

Now working toward his doctor's degree, Roylance is living in Rexburg with his wife and three daughters. His current play production is "Rossum's Universal Robots," a three act fantasy.  

Rossum's Universal Robots, or R. U. R., written by Karel Capek, performed in the Playmill on 26 and 27 March with an extra matinee on the twenty-sixth.

The final play of the season was Father Knows Best, and was a joint effort of the college and the community players. Professor Roylance directed the show and took the leading part of father as well. Helen Evans was the assistant director. The show played on 13, 14 and 15 May 1954.

The 1953-54 course catalogue dropped the following course offerings that had been offered previously.

Theory and Principles of Acting
Problems in Play Production
Private Instruction in Dramatic and Interpretive Reading
Play Production
Summer Play Production and Direction
Creative Dramatics
Radio Announcing
Radio Production and Direction
Radio Writing
Radio Broadcasting Problems

The new courses offered this year included the following:
Beginning Acting
Intermediate Acting
Radio Broadcasting Rehearsal and Performance
Stage Craft
Private Instruction
Advanced Public Speaking
Development of the Drama
Speech Disorders and Classroom Therapy
Private Instrumentation

1954 - 1955

The first play of the season was a premier showing of Miles Hendon by the college and the Upper Valley Players.

The cast for the world premier showing of "Miles Hendon," by Albert O. Mitchell, has been selected from Ricks College and Upper Valley Theatre players.

The tentative cast stars Kay Wilkins in the title role of Miles Hendon. . . .

The first world's showing of "Miles Hendon" is scheduled for December 16, 17, and 18 with five performances in the Madison High School auditorium. It is being presented by the Upper Valley and Ricks College theatres.

Thirty-five people tried out for the roles in the play, which is an adaptation of Mark Twain's "The Prince and the Pauper." The play will be one of few stage performances produced by Professor Aaron Roylance since coming here in 1952. Most of his plays have been arena style.

Dr. Mitchell, author of the play, is affiliated with the University of Utah and is a member of the MIA drama committee of the General Board. He spoke at the Ricks Leadership two years ago.

The Man, by Mel Dinelli, was directed by Professor Roylance with the assistance of student director, Helen Evans. The show played 9 and 10 February with an extra matinee on the opening day, totalling three performances.

The drama club, that had taken the Greek letters, "Sigma Delta Rho" as their title, produced three one-act plays.


The performances are scheduled for 4:15 and 8:15 p.m. and students will be admitted for 25 cents and their student body cards. Directors of the three productions are George Benton, Jay McDonald, and Shirlene Wurst.
The Ricks College and Upper Valley Players produced *In Time of Harvest* on 24 and 25 March.\(^{23}\)

The final production for the year was *Mrs. McThing*.

The highlight of the drama season here will be "Mrs. McThing," according to nearly 50 people who tried out for the year's final presentation.

A tentative cast of 14 people with still others to be named was announced early this week by director Aaron Roylance. Nathan Smith and Helen Evans will be assistant directors of the comedy written by Mary Chase, author of the Broadway and movie hit, "Harvey."

... The play will not be presented until May 14-15.\(^{24}\)

1955 - 1956

Professor Roylance began this season directing his second Shakespearean play, *Much Ado About Nothing*.

A tentative cast for "Much Ado About Nothing," by William Shakespeare, has been partially named by director Aaron Roylance. Ruth Biddulph will take the part of Beatrice; Lyle Watson, the role of Benedict; ... Marcene Fielding, a senior speech minor, will be the assistant director.

The play will be produced by the Ricks College and Upper Valley Theatres November 9 and 10 in the Ricks Playmill.\(^{25}\)

The "Speech and Drama" department changed its name to "Speech, Drama and Radio" in 1954.\(^{26}\) Another welcome change in the department was the addition of a second faculty member in 1955. Rue C. Johnson (Fig. 14), a graduate of Brigham Young University, directed the second show of the current season, *John Loves Mary*.

An all student cast for "John Loves Mary," by Norman Krasna, has been named by director Rue C. Johnson as the second of the Ricks–Upper Valley theatre season plays.

... The modern setting for the play, to be produced Friday and Saturday, December 2 and 3, is the home of Senator James McKinley at St. Regis Hotel in New York City. The play will be produced in the Ricks Playmill with night performances at 8:15 on both presentation days and a matinee on December 2 at 4:15.

The production is the first to be directed by Professor Johnson. He will be assisted by Margurette, Weaver, Ammon.\(^{27}\)
Fig. 14. Rue C. Johnson
An English professor also assisted during the next few years, directing several plays. Professor Howard E. Salisbury taught literature and served as Humanities Division chairman for a time before leaving Ricks College.²⁸ Professor Salisbury directed the third show of the season, Pygmalion and Galatea, on 8 and 9 February 1956.²⁹

A statue can come to life? You don't believe it? Then you'll want to see "Pygmalion and Galatea" at the Ricks College Playmill Wednesday and Thursday. There will be three presentations of the play: Wednesday at 4:10 and 8:15 p.m. and Thursday at 8:15 p.m.

... The play is directed by Prof. Howard E. Salisbury and is assisted by Dean Thomson, Rexburg, student director. Grand new scenery is to be used in the play. It was designed by Prof. Aaron Roylance. The statue was made by Prof. Oliver Parson.³⁰

Professor Rue Johnson directed Lenore Coffee and William Joyce Cowen's Family Portrait, which was staged in the Rexburg tabernacle and played on 22, 23, and 24 March 1956.³¹

On 3 and 4 May 1956, Sabrina Fair, written by Samuel Taylor, was produced under the direction of Aaron Roylance. Brigham Young University had recently staged the same play, "... and was the most successful box play produced at the BYU this school year."³² No doubt Professor Roylance was hoping his production would fare as well.

Work on the new fine arts facility continued, and anticipation of its completion is reflected in the following Viking Scroll article.

With the coming use of the new building, the radio and drama departments will take a big step from close, crowded facilities to the most modern set-up in this area.

For drama there's a scenery shop equipped with all power tools. There will be in it all the equipment necessary for building and painting scenery and properties. There will be a paint well there and a combination shower for added convenience.

Especially for the comfort of the actors there will be a class room and green room combination. (In the language of dramatists a green room is a lounge.) There will also be a small kitchenette attachment.

In the way of modern light set-ups, they will have the latest light control system for the stage. By remote control dimming
equipment they can dim or control the color of lights on the stage or in the auditorium.

Next year those who go in for broadcasting will find that Ricks will have its own daily broadcasting station, working on a closed circuit system and having a direct line hookup to radio station KRXK.

They will have the latest recording equipment with two studios and control rooms.

**1956 - 1957**

This year marked a giant step forward for the arts at Ricks College, with the opening of the new auditorium building on campus (Figs. 15-16). The Theatre Department could stage their first proscenium productions in more than a decade. John Clarke recalled some of the events that led to the building's completion.

The Church finally agreed that we could go ahead with the auditorium building. You see at that time we didn't even have a place to hold assemblies. We held assemblies at the fourth ward chapel. The kids walked across the street, so we needed it for a lot of reasons.

Bill Kauffman was the head of the speech department at the time and was vitally interested in a few things he was hoping to get in the facility. I remember he mentioned the size of the stage. Over the years I've learned a few things about theatre, from those who talk about it, but I had to be the one to present their case. The proscenium opening at that time seemed to be fairly adequate, but we couldn't get them to give us an equal amount of wing space. I was told that to have it right, especially if you didn't have a fly loft, both sides had to be the same width as the proscenium opening, so you could put things on wagons to push them in and out.

I still remember going down to the Presiding Bishopric, who was running the building program for the Church. I went down to the Church office building and talked with one of the members of the Presiding Bishopric. I was telling him how wide we wanted the stage area; opening this wide; equal distance on both sides, etcetera. He said, 'Do you know how big that is? You're asking us to build a stage as big as this church office building.' A lot of them didn't have a view; their view was the little stage in a cultural hall.

I went down on one trip and the brethren were talking about making it an all-purpose room. There would be a stage alright, but there would be a flat floor used for a dance hall, chairs wouldn't be fixed, and it would hold five hundred people. I said, 'That's not a college theatre; that's a recreation hall!' So they were going to have this flat ballroom floor, and this stage, a little teensy thing, and seat five hundred people. I said, 'That's not a college theatre! How can we compete with other schools? How can we invite students to come to our school when all these other schools,
Fig. 15. Exterior of Kirkham Building.

Fig. 16. Kirkham Auditorium.
many of them, have these beautiful places and equipment?" He looked at me and said, 'If I'm reading you right, President Clarke, you want something on the college level.' I said, 'That's exactly right.' So he changed his tune a little bit, but we never could get that stage the right size. The east wing is not the same width as the west.

At that time I was the Stake President, as well as the College President, and that's where I put in my licks with the general authorities.

I remember getting ahold of Henry Moyle, who was to our conference, who later became a member of the First Presidency. He wasn't an Apostle then, but he was an important man in the financial part of the Church. I said, 'Two years before this building is built, you won't be able to seat everybody. You don't want to stop with five hundred students, do you?' He said, 'Well, you never can build enough, but that doesn't sound very good, does it?' He left, but I saw him again a week or two later in Salt Lake City. I was walking down the sidewalk in front of the Hotel Utah when he came around the corner and saw me. He said, 'Brother Clarke, I have some good news for you. I talked them into three hundred more seats. I said that was a good start. We eventually got a thousand seats; we wanted twice that many, but with the lighting and sound located where they were, we couldn't.

When they started the Kirkham they dug a hole, excavated all the soil they needed to make a basement, then everything stopped. I kept trying to find out what had happened, what was going on. I always got put off. We were a four year school then. We got President McKay to come up to give the baccalaureate address to the graduates. I lived in the big stone house on this corner and he stayed over night. President McKay was always one to get up early in the morning, four o'clock, and I said, 'Before you leave town, if you will, you won't even have to get out of the car, but I would just like to show you something on our campus.' He had come in late that night before, just in time to take him to the tabernacle. He said, 'Okay,' so we just drove up College Avenue and I stopped the car. I said, 'See that hole there? We have had a building authorized. That has been there a full year and nothing's happening. Is there anything we need to do? Do you know why this is not being furthered?' He said, 'I don't know, but I'll promise you one thing. When I get back to Salt Lake City, I'll inquire and find out.' I found out later from a man who was in the meeting of the expenditure committee of the Church, that President McKay was there and said, 'By the way, what's the matter? What's happening up at Ricks College? I was there the other day and there's a big hole in the ground and nothing's happening. What's holding it up? There were people in the room, I'm sure in my mind; I have no proof, but there were people there that were holding it up.' Not a word was said. 'So, President McKay said,' 'I want that building to go forward, immediately!' It went forward immediately.

With the completion of the new fine arts building, which was eventually named the Oscar Kirkham building, the music and drama
faculties joined together to produce the first musical at the college since Professor Catmull and Professor Anderson staged the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, Patience, in March of 1943. The Musical was Richard Rodgers and Moss Hart's A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court.

To those of you who like fresh unforgettable music, a thrilling score and an unusual plot, the musical and drama department have it for you in its forthcoming presentation of "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court." . . . Playgoers will have the opportunity of seeing the play during leadership week, Nov. 14, 15, and 16.

. . . The present production will call for symphony and choir both with Prof. Roylance as over-all director. Nelda Ricks has been chosen as student director and Mrs. Jacob will direct the soloists. Prof. Slaughter will be conducting the orchestra, original choreography will be created by Mrs. Messervy with Prof. Johnson working with drama, sound, and staging.

. . . Seats for this play and for the rest of the plays will be reserved so a playgoer may have the same seat for the whole season. Season tickets sell for $4.50, with tickets to individual performances selling for $1.00. Students tickets are still selling at $.25.

Professor Salisbury directed Edward Chodorov's Kind Lady on 13 and 14 December 1956.

Suspense, thrill and excitement is expected to abound in the atmosphere of the play production, "Kind Lady," to be presented by the drama department on December 13 and 14, at 7:30 p.m. This is the first play to be held in the new auditorium, and the variety of stage assets of lighting and sound will be fully utilized in providing a more vivid, realistic setting for the play.

. . . Professor Salisbury is directing the play and Sharon Haws is assistant director.

Professor Johnson directed the next show, George Washington Slept Here, written by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman, which played on 5, 6, and 7 February 1957. President John L. Clarke recalled a specific incident involving Rue Johnson and this production.

I have to tell you a little story about Rue. Of course the school was small then, and the President had all the problems. He put on a play, by this time they had the Kirkham building—I think it was "George Washington Slept Here,"—and in it, he cut out a lot of things, you have to cut out a lot of things with a school like Ricks. But he left in a few "Hells" and "Damns," and he had
them holding whiskey flasks in their hands—and that was when they was pretty liberal. A half dozen people called him up at work and really gave him the works—what did he mean by doing these things at a church school like Ricks College? So he came into my office all upset. He was a BYU fellow; he said, 'BYU left twice as much stuff in as I did! I cut out more than I thought I should.'

I said, 'I wasn't one of them that called you up, was I?' And he said, 'No.'

But he was upset, so much so, the next play that he put on he kind of carried this with him—a chip on his shoulder.

One day he came marching into my office with a play book with him.

'This is the play we're planning to do next. I don't want any trouble; will you cut it?'

I looked at him and said, 'Rue, no I won't! That's your business, that's what you're hired for. You do what you think is the right thing. You know who you're working for, you know what people are like here. You have more sensitivity for these things.'

Elizabeth F. Goodspeed's The Wizard of Oz was the second musical produced this year by the Music and Drama departments. Professor Roylance directed, with choreography by Mrs. Fontell Messervy. The orchestra was under the direction of Professor Grant B. Jenkins, with the performances on 13 and 14 February 1957.

Shakespeare's MacBeth was staged 22 and 23 March 1957, under the direction of Professor Roylance.

Norval Bigler, speech and drama director at Madison High School, will play the lead role of MacBeth in the Ricks College Upper Valley Theatre production of "MacBeth," March 22 and 23, in the Ricks auditorium.

The final play of the season was directed by Professor Johnson with Sara Lee Heileson as student director. Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie, played 14, 18, and 19 April 1957.

Rue C. Johnson took a leave of absence this year to pursue his doctorate, but he did not return to Ricks. Lyle Watson was chosen to be his replacement.
Lyle graduated from Ricks College while it had been a four-year institution, serving the school as its student body president his senior year in 1949-1950. He returned to his home in Arizona for one year after graduation and worked in business. The next year he came back to visit Rexburg and was offered a teaching job at Sugar City High School three miles north of Rexburg. He took the offer and taught there four years. He then moved to Albany, Oregon and taught there while working on his graduate degree. The next year he and his wife moved to Corvalis, Oregon. When the offer came to teach at Ricks College in 1957 he accepted readily and began teaching without having completed his degree. He went to Brigham Young University during the next several summers to complete his graduate work.43

Aaron Roylance directed Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which played 13 and 14 November 1957. The production was a joint effort of Ricks College and the Upper Valley Players. Lyle Watson took the part of Oberon.44

Lyle Watson and student director Linda Rowan mounted Agatha Christie's *Witness for the Prosecution*, on 4 and 5 December.45

Victor Chandler, a member of Upper Valley Players directed *My Three Angels*, by Sam and Bella Spewack. The production in the auditorium was presented 5 and 6 February 1958.46

"Harvey," written by Mary Chase, is the delightful comedy concerning the six foot imaginary rabbit. This play was presented March 1st at Blackfoot Junior High, March 5th and 6th for the Youth Leadership Conference held at Ricks College. Aaron A. Roylance directed the play.47

Professor Lyle Watson directed *Huck Finn*, which played on 23 and 24 April 1958.48
The final show for the season, and the final show directed by Professor Aaron Roylance at Ricks College, was *Inherit the Wind*, by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee, which played 21 and 22 May.⁴⁹
NOTES

1Card Catalogue to Theses and Dissertations, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

2Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 30 September 30, 1952.

3Ibid., 18 November 1952.

4Ibid., 13 January 1953.

5Ibid., 27 February 1953.

6Ibid., 3 February 1953.

7Ibid., 26 May 1953.

8Ibid., 24 March 1953.

9Ibid., 21 April 1953.

10Ibid., 12 May 1953.

11Ibid., 16 September 1953.

12Ibid., 10 November 1953.


14Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 26 January 1954.

15Ibid., 10 March 1954.

16Ibid., 23 March 1954.

17Ibid., 14 April 1954.

18Ricks College Course Catalogue, 1953-1954.

19Ibid., 1954-1955.

20Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 24 November 1954.

21Ibid., 9 February 1955.
22Ibid., 2 March 1955.
23Ibid., 16 March 1955.
24Ibid.
25Ibid., 4 October 1955.
26Ricks College Course Catalogue, 1954-1955.
27Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 22 November 1955.
28Ruth Biddulph, telephone interview to her home in Rexburg, Idaho, 6 March 1982.
29Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 18 October 1955.
30Ibid., 7 February 1956.
31Ibid., 20 March 1956.
32Ibid., 1 May 1956.
33Ibid., 8 May 1956.
34President John L. Clarke, interviewed in his home, Rexburg, Idaho, 5 January 1982.
35Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 23 October 1956.
36Ibid., 4 December 1956.
37Ibid., 17 January 1957.
38President John L. Clarke, interviewed in his home, Rexburg, Idaho, 5 January 1982.
39Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 14 February 1957.
40Ibid., 28 February 1957.
41Ricks College Yearbook, Rixida, 1957.
42President John L. Clarke, interviewed in his home, Rexburg, Idaho, 5 January 1982.
43Lyle Watson, telephone interview to his home in Mesa, Arizona, 30 January 1982.
44 Ricks College Yearbook, Rixida, 1958.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.


49 Ibid., 14 May 1958.
CHAPTER VIII

LYLE WATSON

Lyle Watson (Fig. 17) first came to Ricks College as a student in 1948 and became a four-year graduate of the school in 1950. The following article found in the Viking Scroll of 28 February 1950 speaks of Watson as he served the student body as its president.

With the coming of Professor William Kauffman to Ricks College came a drama enthusiast who later became student body president. This student is Lyle Watson of Thatcher, Arizona.

The story began in Gila Junior College in Arizona where Lyle was studying dramatics under Professor Kauffman who was then on the faculty there. The mutual understanding of play production that the two shared brought about a lasting friendship, and the Professor became interested in Lyle's dramatic abilities.

When Lyle graduated he was called to fulfill a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the New England states. Soon after Prof. Kauffman transferred to California, and although a continent separated them, they corresponded regularly.

Prof. Kauffman transferred again, this time to Ricks College. When Lyle found that Ricks was to become a four year institution, he was persuaded to come to assist Professor Kauffman with his duties in the drama department. He was released from his mission in time to enroll at Ricks in the fall of 1948.

Since that time the pair have been working together in the drama department and have "mutually benefited," said Professor Kauffman. Besides acting as co-director in the stage productions on the campus, Lyle has appeared in "The Hill Between," "Papa is All," and "Study No. One." He also has directed a number of one-act plays.

After he graduates from Ricks in the spring, Lyle plans to continue his speech and dramatic work and get his master's degree. It is the desire of Prof. Kauffman that he find a teaching position close to Rexburg so they can continue their work together.

Valley High school in Thatcher claims the honor of graduating our president and having him represent them in the service of the country. He served four years in the United States Army in the Pacific and then as an officer in Europe.

At Gila he was a member of the Delta Psi Omega Honorary Dramatic Organization.

Last year Lyle was vice-president of the Epsilon and a charter member of the Delta Phi, returned missionary fraternity. He was also vice-president of that organization.
Fig. 17. Lyle Watson.

Fig. 18. Kay Wilkins.
This year he is kept busy with his duties as student body president, activities in the Delta Phi, and his work at the Liberty Men's Store where he works.\(^1\)

Lyle Watson did not hold a masters degree when first coming to Ricks, but completed it shortly after at Brigham Young University, where he attended during the summers to further his education.\(^2\)

His second year at Ricks, Lyle was made acting chairman of the department while Professor Roylance took a leave of absence to pursue a doctor's degree. Aaron Roylance, however, did not return to Ricks, and Lyle Watson, the "acting department head," eventually became "the department head." Watson recalled, "I was acting chairman for sometime thinking Roylance would come back. I was acting chairman before I was appointed chairman, and together that chairmanship lasted a long time."\(^3\)

Kay Wilkins (Fig. 18) also joined the department in 1957, the same year Lyle Watson came. He was involved heavily with radio and broadcasting and had very little to do with theatre and drama. When Roylance went on leave, Kay Wilkins and Lyle Watson were the only faculty members remaining to fulfill the needs of the growing department. Kay Wilkins recalled how uncomfortable he felt at directing.

I did direct two Ricks College productions in the late fifties. They were both in the round, on separate years. One was "Heaven Can Wait," and the other was "Twelve Angry Men." Lyle was one of the jurors. Both plays were performed in the choir room in the Kirkham. That was an experience. I had never had any directing experience or training. Lyle Watson and I were the only department members and he felt: Hey, give me some help! He was doing everything, all the sets, building, directing and so I agreed to try to direct one. It was kind of fun. Frustrating because I hadn't had any training.\(^4\)

Kay Wilkins was also a graduate of Ricks College while it was a four-year institution, in the spring of 1956. He then went to the State
University of Iowa and completed a master's degree in speech communications in 1957. In September of that year he came to Ricks College as a faculty member.  

1958 – 1959

Professor Watson directed The Diary of Anne Frank as the season's first production. Howard Salisbury, a member of the English faculty and former director in the college's theatre season, wrote the following play review for the school paper.

Professor Lyle Watson's production of "The Diary of Anne Frank" presents to the Upper Snake River Valley an achievement of extraordinary distinction. It would be difficult to imagine that a performance by professional theatre could surpass it. The play itself, lifted out of the diary of a young Jewish refugee in Holland, preserves in innocence, self-consciousness, and forthrightness of a girl who unwittingly set down all the hopes and anxieties and fantasies of wholesome adolescence, which, under stress, take on a dimension of irony impossible in purely imaginative writing or fictionalized history. This is not only true to truth but true to life; not only real but actual. The tensions of personality and character under stress take on an immediacy which identifies the spectator with the characters to a degree achieved only by the rare masterpieces of the world.

Better than conscious literary effort, the diary and thus the play tests the values which seem to preserve rational action in a context of irrational hatred and incriminations. To bring these values to life and to recreate the spontaneous response to the conflicting values of desperate personalities equally frustrated by a two-year confinement is to confront us with the fact, not the illusion; with the reality, not the dream. It is to achieve dramatic illusion in the best meaning of the term, the irony which makes the illusion and reality one and the same. The staging and the characterizations without exception created and sustained the aura of European culture. At least one member of the audience marveled throughout the performance at the authenticity of this tragic ordeal and at the believable expression of its truth. Tensions, mounting steadily through the play, were sustained not by the obvious devices of amateur showmanship or melodramatic exhibitionism, but by the subtle inflections and nuances of voice and gesture and by the wonderful and almost constant shift of focus among the various levels of the set.

Professor Watson, the all-star cast, and a corps of dedicated assistants should realize satisfaction in the assurance that they
have set a standard which surely must influence future productions toward a more discriminating and cultured level.6

Ed Eaton, drama instructor at Sugar Salem High School in Sugar City, served as a guest director for the season's second show, The White Sheep of the Family, written by du Garde Peach and Ian Hay, which played in the Kirkham Auditorium 5 December 1958.7

18 and 19 February saw the production of Guy Bolton's Anastasia, directed by Lyle Watson.8

Kay Wilkins then directed Twelve Angry Men, which played 11, 12, and 13 March 1959, in the choir room of the Kirkham building.9

Professor Watson next directed In Time of Harvest. "The play centered around the conflicts and struggles of the Saints in the Prophet Joseph Smith's last days in Nauvoo, Illinois."10 The play performed 20, 21 and 22 March 1959.11

The final production of the year was Joseph Hayes' Desperate Hours, which played in the auditorium on 23 and 24 April 1959.12

The catalogue offerings for the 1958-1959 school year in the "Department of Speech, Drama and Radio," are as follows:

Fundamentals of Speech
Introduction to Public Speaking
Group Discussion
Speech Clinic
Introduction to the Theatre
Appreciation of the Speech Arts
M.I.A. Drama
Oral Interpretation of Scriptures
Stage Craft
Fundamentals of Interpretation
Fundamentals of Acting
Voice and Diction
Stage Make-Up
Introduction to Speech Therapy
Interpretation Problems
Intermediate Acting
Masters of Drama, Ancient to Modern
Speech for Teachers
The course offerings remained the same during the 1959-1960 school year with these few exceptions. Dropped from the 1958-1959 catalogue were: Masters of Drama, Ancient to Modern; and Radio Announcing. Courses added to this year's catalogue were: Masters of Drama, Classical through Medieval; Masters of Drama, Renaissance through Early Modern; and Masters of Drama, Modern.¹⁴

The first play presented at Ricks College this year was performed by the Brigham Young University Players, under the direction of Harold I. Hansen.

"Romeo and Juliet," Shakespeare's famous tragedy, will be presented by the Brigham Young University players tonight and tomorrow night in the Ricks College auditorium. Harold I. Hansen, head of the speech department at B.Y.U. and director of the annual Hill Cumorah Pageant, will direct the play. Lynn Palmer will star as Juliet and Harold Oaks as Romeo. . . ¹⁵

The Harold Oaks that played Romeo, is currently Chairman of the Department of Theatre and Cinematic Arts at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. Other members of that cast worth mentioning are Lee Gifford and Robert Nelson, both presently faculty members of Ricks College.¹⁶

Time Remembered was the next production slated in the season.

Thursday and Friday nights, December 10 and 11, in the Ricks College Auditorium, a large audience was thoroughly entertained with
a performance of Jean Anouilh's two-act comedy, "Time Remembered." Rarely has the auditorium stage been so handsomely and appropriately dressed. The physical aspects of the production would, alone justify the approximate two hours in the theatre last evening. Prof. Lyle Watson, who does his own designing as well as directing proved himself in this stage setting to a master at this most challenging phase of play production. Properties, colours, lights, incidental music, came together to create an atmosphere wonderfully complimentary to the play and its superb performance.17

A news release to the Deseret News adequately describes the remainder of Ricks' theatre season.

Shakespeare's comedy, "The Winter's Tale," will be presented Jan. 20, 21, 22, arena style, and will be directed by Prof. Howard Salisbury, who is chairman, Division of Humanities, English and French.

"Our Town," a three-act drama by Thornton Wilder will be presented March 10-11. It will be directed by Prof. Lyle Watson. It has been praised by many critics as the finest American play ever written.

"All My Sons," a serious play by Arthur Miller, will be presented May 5-6, and will also be directed by Prof. Watson.18

1960 - 1961

The course offerings in the "Department of Speech, Drama and Radio," made quite a change this year. The total number of courses available dropped from thirty to thirteen.

Fundamentals of Speech
Introduction to Public Speaking
Speech and Hearing Therapy
Speech Coaching
Voice, Diction and Interpretation
Fundamentals of Acting
Make-Up
Introduction to the Theatre
Stage Craft
Introduction to Radio and Television Broadcasting
Radio and Television Studio and Control Room Techniques
Radio and Television Production
Practical Phonetics19

Arthur Miller's The Crucible was performed 9 and 10 November 1960, under the direction of Lyle Watson and student director, Joan Hook.20
Heaven Can Wait, by Harry Segall, was staged in the Kirkham choir room by Kay Wilkins.

The Ricks College presentation of the arena type play, December 7-10, in the choir room is centered around Joe Pendleton. . . . Student director of the three-act comedy-fantasy is Rett Robson with Prof. Kay Wilkins as director.21

In May of 1961 Ricks College became one of the first amateur organizations to perform Archibald MacLeish's play, J.B.

According to an announcement made Thursday by Professor Lyle Watson of the Ricks College Department of Speech, "J.B.," the 1959 Pulitzer-Prize play in verse by the top-hand poet, Archibald MacLeish, will be presented on May 4, 5, and 6 in the Ricks College Auditorium. Permission to be one of the first amateur groups to produce this great new play was granted in January of this year with the understanding that no announcement of the production would be made until after the close of the Broadway touring run on April 1. . . . Mrs. Ruth Biddulph will assist Professor Watson in the direction of the play, while Rett Robson will be the student assistant. Heading the technical staff are Professor Kay Wilkins of the Speech Department and Mr. Wayne Phillips, Bonneville High School speech and drama director. Assisting them will be Ray Runyan, lighting; Bob Oswald, sound; and Jerry Hatch, scenery.22

As well as directing this show, Lyle Watson also starred in the title role of J.B. (Fig. 19). He shared his feelings concerning directing and being in his own production.

There was some time there when I was designing, building, and directing. One time, and only one time, did I try doing all those things as well as being in the show. I was in "J.B." That was my first and last time at doing both. I played the part of "J.B.," and it was just too much.23

Also performed this season was Lawrence and Lee's Auntie Mame, and Hart and Kaufman's Man Who Came to Dinner. Both plays have pictures in the 1961 Rixida yearbook, but directors and performance dates are not included in the data.24

Grand Opera came to Ricks College for the first time in its history this season.
Fig. 19. Watson, center, in "J.B.,” 1961, Kirkham Building.
For the first time in history full-fledged grand opera will come into the Upper Snake River Valley with the presentation of Smetana's popular "Bartered Bride," by the Ricks College Music and Drama Departments on February 10th, 11th, and 15th. According to announcement made by Prof. J. L. Slaughter, college music chairman and director of the production, the opera will be presented in the Ricks college Auditorium on the first two days and is tentatively scheduled for presentation at the Idaho Falls Civic Auditorium on Monday, February 15th.

... Professor Slaughter is chairman of the production staff and will serve as director. Prof. Lyle Watson is supervising staging and acting. In charge of the chorus is Dr. Chester Hill. The choreography is under the direction of Miss Jackie Winterrose. In charge of the costuming is Mrs. Annabelle Snarr of Idaho Falls. Mrs. Ruth Jacob is in charge of the soloists, and Mrs. Ruth Barrus is in charge of the accompanists. Accompanying the soloists in practice are Miss Verlynn Roberts of Sugar City, Joan Hook of Idaho Falls, and Mrs. Nina Wilkins of the Ricks Music faculty.

1961 - 1962

The new season began with Leonard Spigelglass' A Majority of One, on 16, 17 and 18 November 1961. Norval Bigler, then dramatics instructor at Madison High School in Rexburg, was a member of the cast. He participated in several productions with Lyle Watson as the director, and related the following concerning Watson's directing style.

The thing I liked about Lyle was, he would leave you alone and let you be creative. He wasn't dictating every detailed movement and line delivery. Those students who weren't as experienced he would work more with, but those of us who had had some background, he would allow us creative freedom. He told me once, "Go ahead and do a little more if you feel motivated and good about it. I'll tell you if you're going too far."

Lyle Watson next directed Shakespeare's Othello, which played 18, 19, and 20 January 1962.

Giuseppe Verdi's four-act opera, La Traviata, was presented 21, 22, and 23 February 1962.

The production [La Traviata] was directed by Prof. LaMar Barrus, with Dr. Chester W. Hill serving as production manager. Dr. Kay Wilkins was stage manager, Prof. Lyle Watson was technical director, Miss Verlene Winkel had charge of choreography, and Mrs. Ruth Jacob trained the student soloists.
... High praise for the performance was given by Dr. Conan Matthews, Dean of Fine Arts, of Brigham Young University. He stated that the musical presentation was one of the finest he had witnessed and lauded the performance of the soloists for their expert interpretation and fine rendition of the difficult vocal parts.  

James Thurber's *The Male Animal* was directed by Professor Watson and presented 15, 16, and 17 March 1962. He was assisted by Roger Harris of Newdale, Idaho, who was tremendously active in theatre during this season. Roger would eventually return to Ricks College and join the faculty. He recounted a brief history of the events that brought him to Ricks as a student.

I was born and raised in Newdale, Idaho, about sixteen or seventeen miles from here [Rexburg]. I went to school in Sugar Salem High School, but that was the first time I realized drama had anything to offer me. Lyle Watson was my high school teacher. I guess I was a junior or sophomore, when he and I were working in the potatoes together for my father, bucking potatoes. In the process of doing that kind of work he asked me if I was interested in drama at all. I scoffed at the idea and didn't think much about it. I hardly knew he was the drama teacher at that time. But between he and my English teacher, they decided I should be in a play.

It wasn't until my senior year that I was in a play. Lyle caught me in the hall and asked me to come try out. I had had him for a couple of classes by that time. I was very reluctant and kept turning him down, but finally I did, but said I only wanted a small part. I tried out for the smallest part I could find and a couple of days later when he posted the cast, I had the lead. The play was double cast and a week before the play, the person who was double cast in my part broke his leg, so I was stuck with both casts and had the greatest time of my life. My ego was boosted and I ended up in several plays that year. Oops! I was in one play earlier, *The White Lawn* and had the lead. Then I tried out for this, *The Money Man*, wanting a small part and got the lead. That was a contest play which received a superior.

All of this got me interested in theatre, but I still didn't think there was much of a future to it. I thought the only thing you could do was teach teachers, to teach teachers, to teach teachers.

I went to the University of Idaho the next year and went into engineering. Then I changed my major to agricultural engineering. During the time I was at the University of Idaho I had a friend talking about theatre. He was in theatre at the University of Idaho and I told him I didn't think there was anything to it. He said, 'Come over; we have lost a couple of stage hands for our show.' They were doing "Gigi." So I went and got involved in changing scenery for "Gigi." I went to the cast party and got acquainted
with people, and they started to tell me what they were planning to do as a career. I got more interested in it. There was a non-credit class at the time, and I went to that theatre class and got involved in theatre again.

I decided then the next year coming back to the University of Idaho I would go into theatre. I talked to the teachers, Jean Collette and Edmund Shovells, and they said they would arrange for a scholarship for me and kind of cast the play for the following year, and if I would come back I would have a particular part.

The next year I didn't go back to school. I laid out of school for seven years. I did a good number of things. During that time Lyle Watson came to Ricks College. Up until that time Ricks College was the last place in the world I wanted to go to school. I was born and raised here and really didn't think of it as being a college.

One day I found myself sitting right outside this building [Kirkham], on the flower planter right there, talking over goals with my best friend, who had just got off a mission, on what we would do. Lyle's office was just downstairs, what is now the laundry room for the costume shop. I talked to Lyle; he encouraged me to come back, and that's how I came back to school.\textsuperscript{32}

Lyle Watson directed the last play of the season, Sam Levitt's \textit{The Andersonville Trial}. It was staged in the Kirkham choir room and played the 25, 26, 27, and 28 April 1962.\textsuperscript{33}

\textbf{1962 - 1963}

The addition of a new faculty member marked the beginning of this season, bringing to a total three members of the Speech, Drama and Radio Department.

James Lee Gifford (Figs. 20-21) of Jerome [Idaho] has been appointed instructor of speech and drama at Ricks College beginning with the 1962-63 school year, President John L. Clarke of Ricks College announced here today.

Mr. Gifford was recently awarded first place in the graduate division of the first annual Intercollegiate Scenic Design Competition sponsored by Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois, according to an announcement made recently by Dr. Harold I. Hansen, Chairman of Dramatic Arts at Brigham Young University, where Mr. Gifford has been studying. The $100 award was given Mr. Gifford for his design for the setting of "Oedipus Rex."

Mr. Gifford, a graduate student in technical theatre at BYU, has a wide background in all phases of theatrical work.

During the past year he has held a graduate assistantship at BYU in technical theatre and has served as stage manager for "The Boy Friend"; and lighting for the experimental production of "Lamp at
Fig. 20. James Lee Gifford.

Fig. 21. Gifford at patch panel, Kirkham Building.
Midnight." He served as designer, builder, and technical director for the experimental productions of "The Measures Taken" and "Camille," said Pres. Clarke.

In addition to his technical work, he has appeared on stage in "All My Sons," "Blithe Spirit," "Romeo and Juliet," "King Lear," "The Dybbuk," and "The Lark," and has been appearing recently in "Elizabeth, The Queen."

This summer he has been appointed to serve as lighting director for the Hill Cumorah Pageant of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Mr. Gifford received his bachelor of science degree from Brigham Young University in speech education and has been completing work for his master of science degree with a major in theatre and dramatic arts, said Pres. Clark.34

The first show of the 1962-63 season was an Agatha Christie mystery, Mousetrap, directed by Lyle Watson and performed 11, 12, and 13 October 1962.35

The next show played in December and toured to towns in Idaho.

The "Miracle Worker," a play about the early life of Helen Keller, will be presented by the Ricks College drama department Wednesday [March 5] at the Civic Auditorium in Idaho Falls. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday [March 6, 7, and 8] it will run in the Ricks auditorium beginning at 8 p.m. Next week it will play at Twin Falls, Rupert and Jerome, Dec. 12, 13, and 14.

... Prof. Lyle Watson heads the Ricks College speech and drama department with Prof. J. Lee Gifford as the technical specialist. Californian Ralph Rice is the student director.36

Christopher Fry's A Phoenix Too Frequent was directed by Lyle Watson with Roger Harris assisting him. The play performed in the choir room, again being referred to as "The Playmill," 23, 24, 25, and 26 January 1963.37 Lee Gifford, technical director of the production recalled, "A Phoenix Too Frequent was a major accomplishment. We had that whole choir room as an inside of a cave, with chicken wire and muslin. I succeeded well with that one."38
Fig. 22. "Matchmaker" set viewed from sound booth, Kirkham Building, 1963.
The Matchmaker (Fig. 22) by Thornton Wilder and directed by Lyle Watson, played 21, 22, and 23 March 1963. The play starred two community members: Wilma Bean as Mrs. Levi and Norval Bigler as Horace Vandergelder.39

Bizet's Carmen was presented by the Music Department under the direction of Sara Lee Heileson, a graduate of Brigham Young University in Theatre Arts.40 There are not any performance dates available for Carmen in the data collected.

On tap as the year's finale is Steven Vincent Benet's "John Brown's Body." This adaptation of the great civil war epic poem was originally presented on Broadway featuring Tyrone Power, Judith Anderson and Raymond Massey.41

1963 - 1964

Kay Wilkins, who had been with the department for six years, took a leave of absence the fall of 1963 to work on a doctor's degree. Sandra Brown was hired to fill his position while he was away.

Sandra Brown, new instructor in speech and drama, has recently been serving as a missionary for the L.D.S. Church in Berlin, where she has been secretary to the mission president. She was graduated from Ricks College in 1959 with an associate degree in radio and TV speech with English as a minor. She was graduated from Brigham Young University in 1961 with a bachelor of arts degree in the same area of study.42

Lenore Coffee and William Joyce Cowen's Family Portrait was the opener for the season.

Ricks College students and residents of the Upper Valley will enjoy a theatrical treat this week when the Drama Department presents "Family Portrait.

Under the direction of Professor Lyle Watson, with Professor Lee Gifford as technical director, and Miss Colleen Nielson, student director, the play opens Thursday, November 14th, on the Ricks College stage and continues through Saturday, November 16th. Curtain time is 8 p.m.

... Among the players that will present this outstanding drama on the Ricks College stage is Roger Harris of Newdale, who will take the role of Mathias. Mr. Harris received the award for the "outstanding drama student" for 1962-63 at Ricks College.43
Playing the lead role of Mary [Family Portrait] is Mrs. Ruth Biddulph, English teacher at Ricks College. Mrs. Biddulph is known for many fine characterizations on the Ricks College stage. Other faculty members who will take part are Sandra Brown, of the speech department, as Mary Cleophas; Zane Clark, assistant librarian, as James; Lee Gifford of the drama department, as a disciple; and Jon Perry, English instructor, as Appius Hadrian.

Lerner and Loewe's Brigadoon was the next production staged at Ricks in December.

With the whine of bagpipes and the whirl of kilts, Ricks College players stage "Brigadoon," the Scottish musical, in the college auditorium December 11, 12, 13, and 14.

Prof. Lyle Watson, chairman of the joint production committee, is blending together orchestra, chorus, soloist, and dancers with a Scottish flavor in a performance that will prove enjoyable to Upper-Valley audiences. Assisting Prof. Watson and giving musical life to the work is Professor Jay Slaughter, who will conduct the orchestra. Prof. Slaughter, head of the music department, is coordinating the efforts of his musicians with the chorus, under the direction of Prof. Richard Robison, and the soloists, under the guidance of Mrs. Ruth Jacob. Miss Sara Lee Heileson, choreographer, is using authentic folk dances in the production. The technical crew directed by Prof. Lee Gifford and with the help of Prof. Oliver Parson of the Art Department, has captured the beautiful countryside of Scotland.

The Bad Seed by Maxwell Anderson was staged in the choir room in January of 1964.

With characteristic vitality, Miss Sara Lee Heileson prepares the "Bad Seed" for presentation in the Ricks College playmill January 22, 24, 25, and 27. Assisting Miss Heileson, the director of this suspense-filled play, are Prof. Lee Gifford, technical director, and student director, Nancy Parks.

The energetic Miss Heileson, a theatre arts graduate at Brigham Young University, is familiar with all aspects of the dramatic arts. A veteran of many music and drama productions, she was cast last year as Annie Sullivan, the lonely teacher of young Helen Keller, in the "Miracle Worker." Along with 11-year-old Jana Ricks, current star of the "Bad Seed," she appeared before an audience of thousands as the play toured through Idaho, Montana, and Canada.

The opera "Carmen" performed at Ricks last spring, was under the direction of this versatile artist.

Professionally a dancer, Miss Heileson has appeared with the Royal ballet in Los Angeles.

While attending Brigham Young University, Miss Heileson performed throughout the United States as a member of the BYU Variety Show.
A native of the Teton Valley and a graduate of Ricks College, she began her teaching career at Sugar Salem High School and came back to Ricks as an instructor in 1961.  

The next show staged at Ricks was Brandon Thomas' **Charley's Aunt**. The play directed by Lyle Watson performed at Ricks on 12, 13, and 14 March 1964 and also toured Idaho and Oregon the last week of February and the first week in March.  

Roger Harris related his experience with **Charley's Aunt**, that led to the creation of the Playmill Theatre in West Yellowstone, Montana.

I wanted to get into another show because they were going on tour, "Charley's Aunt." I tried out and couldn't get in--my first rejection in three years at Ricks College. I went to Lee Gifford who was a good friend of mine--I had lived with him; he was one of the dorm parents. I was disgusted. I went up to him and said, 'Lee, let's start our own theatre, then nobody can stop us from being in the shows we want to.' He said, 'All right,' but thought I was joking, and I wasn't. That was early in the evening. By the end of that evening we had the basis of the Playmill Theatre set up. We decided who we were going to talk to get involved in it. We decided what we needed to have. At the time we really had only three of us: Lee, myself, and Lyle. Lyle would direct, Lee would do the technical and act in them, and I would act, do the stage managing, do the books and things like that.

The next weekend we went up and found a place, talked Lyle into it, and worked on the place throughout the winter.

By the next spring we decided we needed one more person, so we got Lynn Benson, because he was coming to Ricks that next fall.  

A press article referring to the new Playmill Theatre read as follows.

**WESTGATE PLAYMILL PRODUCTIONS PLEASE TOURISTS AT YELLOWSTONE**

With a unique setting and sparkling crew, a modest Dutch Windmill swings into action here after dark presenting comedy productions six nights weekly.

In a building which formerly housed a small post office and drugstore, the Dutch Windmill came to life at this colorful park entrance city under the renovating hands of a dramatic group. Reconstructed in arena style, this is the setting for Westgate Playmill, scene of summer theatre for tourists and patrons of surrounding states.
During the summer show season, which runs to Labor Day, a trio of three-act comedies are presented Monday through Saturday. Productions being staged include "Harvey," "See How They Run," and "The Doctor In Spite of Himself."

Because of a conflict between the directors, Lyle Watson did not complete the summer at the West Yellowstone Playmill. Roger Harris left at the end of the summer to continue his schooling and was unable to return, leaving only Lynn Benson and Lee Gifford as directors, owners, and producers of the Westgate Playmill.50

The final production of the Ricks College 1963-1964 season was Shakespeare's Hamlet, which played 7, 8, and 9 May 1964, directed by Lyle Watson.51

1964 - 1965

This season saw the coming of three new faculty members to the Department of Speech, Drama and Radio. One professor was an addition, and the other two were replacements for faculty members on leave.52

Lee Gifford, who went on leave, recalled his reasons for doing so.

When I came to Ricks College, I was not only assigned the technical theatre responsibilities, but was made manager of the Kirkham building, which made me responsible for scheduling in the building. We designed three to four shows a year—a very active, ambitious program with only one director. I was here two years, but the feud, the emotional conflict, the personality conflict between drama, speech, and music was so intense. They were both housed in the same space, using the same facility, both very ambitious people. I got stuck in the middle as building manager. It got vicious, Lyle and Jay Slaughter.

That Christmas we went to spend with my in-laws, and on the way to Southern California, stopped at BYU and unloaded all my troubles with Charles Henson. He said, 'There's a man in Iowa looking for a technical director.'

So, we flew to Des Moines to talk. I was also in summer theatre in Grand Lakes, Michigan. I got the offer and so I finished the next semester nurturing it, so when the personality conflicts got hot I said, 'I don't have to take this crap.'
I wrote a nice four page letter to President Clarke. He called for me to see him. I told him I was leaving and he said to take a leave of absence instead. So, I went on a leave with pay that first year to try it out and loved it. Gee! My kids were young enough, I devoted my full time to theatre. At the end of the first year I had a fine raise, we bought a home, and I called President Clarke and said, 'Can you beat that?' So the second year I was just on leave, with no pay, but after my second year I began to miss home. My oldest had started school and things were getting tough at home.

In the meantime Lynn and I had started the Playmill Theatre; that first summer I was gone, but I came back those two summers. The traveling and hassle! So, I talked with President Clarke and he said he could meet the salary and wanted me back. I said I would if I didn't have to be in theatre.

Meantime, my son, four years old, had died of cancer. During the Playmill experience he was sick, and the reality of how much time theatre was taking out of my life and away from my family came to a sharp, painful focus. The only thing that little boy wanted was Daddy, just take me for a ride on your bike, and I never had time for that. The older boys gave up little league, we gave up garden. All these things I had waited all my life to have, just for theatre. Though I enjoyed it, the price seemed high. So, I came back and got into speech. My exposure to theatre since then has been when one has persuaded me to take a role. I did that and enjoyed that.

Robert W. Nelson was the faculty member chosen to fill Lee Gifford's vacancy in the department. Robert related the following biographical information.

I'm a native of Spanish Fork, Utah. I attended all the local schools, junior high and high school. I graduated in 1953. In my sophomore year we had an aspiring prospective high school drama teacher by the name of Lynn Benson. This was when he was graduating from BYU in 1951. He had me in class before I really got involved in theatre. I was scared of my shadow.

I went to BYU for two years, then on a mission to France. I graduated the spring of 1960. I had certified to teach high school and went to Tooele, Utah, for two years, then back to BYU to work on my masters degree. I went back the fall of 1962. I stayed there two years getting my M.A.

I came [to Ricks] in 1964, the same time Lynn Benson and Alan Bossard came. The department then consisted of Lyle and Kay Wilkins and Lee Gifford. At the time I came, Lyle was doing the theatre classes, and Lee was in technical. Kay had gone on leave one year earlier, and Sandra Brown did broadcasting for that year. She left on short notice and Kay was still on leave, so they brought Alan [Bossard] up here at the last minute. In fact he came a week after school started. I knew Alan before. I know he didn't apply, but he was to be a one year stop gap until Kay was back the following year.
Lee had gone on leave to Des Moines; I took Lee's place and Lynn was just an addition to the department. 54

J. Lynn Benson filled the new faculty position at Ricks. Benson provided the following biographical information.

I was born and raised in Moreland, Idaho, on September 4, 1924. I went to school at Moreland Elementary and Moreland High School, and graduated in 1942.

I was very active in theatre and sports at Moreland High School. I played in my first play when I was a sophomore. When I was a junior, I became interested in theatre in a more advanced degree. I did readings and went to the state festival and received a Superior award. At that time my drama teacher was Lucille Anderson, who just happened to be from Rexburg, Idaho. Most of the training I received in high school came from Miss Anderson.

When I was a senior we went to declamation or drama festival in Provo, Utah. There were five western states invited to this invitational tournament. I took a dramatic reading there called "The Finger of god," by Wilde. I happened to be the only one to win a superior at that festival which made our home town newspaper very proud. I graduated in 1942, serving the school for twelve years, being neither absent nor tardy.

I came to Ricks College for one quarter in the fall of 1942. I met Joe Catmull at that time, who has had quite an influence in my life and the theatre.

I turned eighteen in September of 1942, enlisted in the navy in January 1943, and served for three years.

After getting out of the navy I went back to Moreland and worked around at some odd jobs and met Fern Scorsby who was teaching school in the second grade in Moreland. We got acquainted and were married in June of 1946.

In the fall of 1946 Fern and I moved to Rexburg, where I spent another year at Ricks College. I felt it wasn't to my advantage to stay here if he [Joe Catmull] wasn't going to be here. I left Ricks College in the spring of 1947.

Fern and I went to Iona [Idaho], her home town, and we both taught in the elementary school.

At the end of that school year, the spring of 1948, I moved my family to Provo, Utah. I had planned to go to the University of Utah, but my grades at Ricks College were not exceptional and they needed people with exceptional grades at the University of Utah. So, in lieu of that I went to Provo and worked at Brigham Young University. I worked mostly with the Pardoes, Doctor T. Earl Pardoe. Doctor Pardoe was the chairman of the department at that time. Doctor Clinger was in the department and Preston Gledhill. I'm sure there were others in the department, but these were the people I worked most closely with. I was in quite a few plays...

In 1950 I received the outstanding supporting actor award. That was for "She Stoops To Conquer." Max Golightly received the outstanding actor award for "The Corn is Green." In 1951 I received the outstanding actor award at BYU for my role in "Ladies in Retirement," and Shylock in "Merchant of Venice." 55
After graduation, Lynn Benson taught one year at O. E. Bell Junior High, in Idaho Falls, Idaho. He then moved back to Moreland where he taught for six years winning the state drama competition five of the six years.56

During the summer of 1958 Lynn directed an Idaho Falls community production of Promised Valley. Doctor C. Lowell Lees, the director of the original production, saw Lynn's work and offered him an assistantship to the University of Utah. Lynn was unable to accept then but went a year later in 1959.57

In the spring of 1960 Lynn went to the Brigham Young University Laboratory School and taught for three years. In the spring of 1964, he received an invitation to come to Ricks College and arrived just in time to be invited to be a part of the Westgate Playmill. Lynn had known Lyle Watson and Lee Gifford before and met Roger Harris that spring.58

The three of them were contemplating opening up a theatre in West Yellowstone, Montana. When I came to teach at Ricks College, they invited me to come in and work in a partnership at the Playmill in West Yellowstone, which I did. We opened the Playmill in the spring of 1964, and I started teaching at Ricks in the Fall of 1964 and have been here and at the Playmill ever since.59

Alan Bossard, the third new faculty member of 1964-1965, shared the following about himself.

I went to my early schooling in Manti and Richfield, Utah. I graduated from Richfield High School in 1957.

I got my bachelor degree in speech and dramatic arts, with an emphasis in radio at Brigham Young University in 1962. I then did an additional two years of graduate work until 1964, primarily in communications broadcasting.

At BYU I did a lot of sound work with plays. That's how I got into the drama area. When I came up here to teach in 1964, they found out I had had that experience. I was drafted and since that time, for the last seventeen years, I have done all the sound on all the plays. So, I have been closely involved with the dramatic
department. In fact when I first came here, it was the speech and drama department combined, so we were all involved in the same department.

... We used to hang fifteen microphones all around the stage to reinforce the actors, and supposed singers. They had quite an extensive season even then. I think they did five shows a year.60

The first play of the season was Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse's Life With Father.

The 1964-65 Ricks College drama season opens Dec. 10, with the presentation in the Oscar A. Kirkham Auditorium of the classical comedy, "Life With Father." The hit play, which centers around struggles of a family to have the head of the house properly baptized, will continue through Dec. 12.

Prof. Lyle Watson, veteran director, will supervise the production with the aid of Evelyn Daw as assistant director. A native of Arizona, Prof. Watson joined the Ricks College faculty in 1957.

Miss Daw, who is from Idaho Falls, is remembered from her performance of last year. She received the outstanding actress award and was particularly effective in her role as the mother queen in "Hamlet."61

In January of 1965 the music and drama departments joined in producing Faust, an opera based on part one of Goethe's classic poem with music by Charles Gounod.62

The opera is slated for presentation in the Oscar A. Kirkham Auditorium Jan. 20-23.

Heading the production committee is Dr. Chester W. Hill, Chairman of Humanities and head of the Music Department. Working with him are Dr. Jay L. Slaughter, who will direct the orchestra; Prof. Lynn Benson, stage director; Prof. Robert Nelson, technical director; Miss Sara Lee Heileson, choreographer. . .63

The Glass Menagerie, by Tennessee Williams, was presented 17, 18, 19, and 20 February 1965, in the Playmill choir room of the Kirkham building. The production was directed by Lyle Watson, with Kent DaBell as student director.64

Robert Nelson, assisted by his wife Kathleen, next directed Shakespeare's Taming of the Shrew. The play performed in the Kirkham Auditorium on 18, 19, and 20 March 1965.65
My Fair Lady, by Lerner and Loewe, was directed by Lyle Watson and played in the auditorium 6, 7, and 8 May 1965. Taking the lead role of Henry Higgins was Lynn Benson who said, "It was the first musical I had ever been in, and I was terrified! But, it was a good experience." 66

1965 - 1966

The first show of the season, Rodgers and Hammerstein's "The Sound of Music," starred Lynn Benson in the male lead.

Lynn Benson, member of the Speech Department at Ricks College, and well known for his role as Prof. Higgins in the Ricks production last spring of "My Fair Lady," will play the male lead in "Sound of Music."

Lyle Watson, director of the musical, in announcing the cast, pointed out members are not only from Ricks but from communities in the Upper Snake River Valley.

Rehearsals are underway for the Rodgers and Hammerstein production being staged in the Oscar Kirkham Auditorium at Ricks Nov. 3-6 and in the Civic Auditorium in Idaho Falls Nov. 9-10.

... Two faculty wives will be seen, Marilyn Humphreys, wife of Prof. Glen A. Humphreys of the history department, and Elizabeth Bossard of the Speech Department. 67

A unique thing about this production of Sound of Music, was the employing of a professional actress-recording star to play the female lead of Maria. Karen Chandler, formerly Eve Nadauld of Rexburg was the first of several show business professionals that would be hired by the college to play the lead roles in musicals. 68 This concept, of hiring professionals to work alongside the students at Ricks in its musical productions, became a major thrust in the teaching philosophy of Lyle Watson. He relates the following:

I had a hard time getting them to do musical theatre. Jay Slaughter was there at the time, who was opposed to doing that type of thing, but I finally convinced him that we should do one.

That was definitely the highlight of my career, working with various professional people in the musicals. My philosophy was that it was a good experience for the younger students to work with these professional people.
Not everyone shared that point of view, but I felt it was good for our students to have that kind of exposure.69

Lynn Benson next directed Rashomon, by Fay and Michael Kanin. The production played the first week in December in the Kirkham Auditorium.70

Puccini's opera, La Bohème, was directed by Lynn Benson, with the music under the baton of LaMar Barrus. The cast of seventy persons performed 17, 18, and 19 February 1966.71

The Importance of Being Earnest, by Oscar Wilde, was directed by Lyle Watson, assisted by Cynthia Benson, Lynn Benson's daughter. Robert Nelson served as technical director for the show that played in the Playmill choir room on 17, 19, 20, 21 and 22 January, and later toured to "... Jerome, Nampa, Sugar City [Idaho], Richland and Moses Lake, Wash., and Nyssa, Ore."72

Joseph Kesselring's Arsenic and Old Lace was the final production of the regular season. Lynn Benson directed the show, but performance dates are not included in available data.73

The Playmill in West Yellowstone, Montana, produced its third season of shows under the direction of Lynn Benson and Lee Gifford. Oliver Goldsmith's She Stoops To Conquer and a melodrama, West of East Lynne served as the bill of fare.74

A production was produced at Ricks College in July as a part of the summer school program.

The three-act comedy, "Papa Is All," will be staged at Ricks College in July as part of the summer school program.

Prof. Lyle Watson, head of the drama department at Ricks, is play director. The play, by Patterson Greene, will be presented as a theater in the round production July 14, 15, and 16, and the following week, July 21-22. The play, open to the public, will be presented at the Playmill in the Oscar Kirkham Auditorium.
... Prof. Robert Nelson of Rexburg, a member of the Ricks faculty, will play the lead role of the father. Kathleen Nelson, also of Rexburg, will play the part of the mother.

... Prof. Nelson, who designed such sets last year as "Sound of Music" and "Rashomon," will be the technical director for the play and set designer. He is formerly of Spanish Fork, Utah.

1966 - 1967

A new course was offered this year in the newly named Department of Speech, Drama and Broadcast. The course was titled, "Introduction to Speech Corrections and Aural Rehabilitation." This was the first change in the curriculum since 1960. Lyle Watson was also listed in the catalogue as being head of the department for the first time. Before this year he was listed only as acting head.

The first play of the season was written by a Mormon playwright, Christie Lund Coles, entitled The Red Plush Parlor.

A three-act musical play, adapted from a book by a well-known authoress of the LDS Church, will be presented at Ricks College Nov. 3-5.

Prof. Lyle Watson, head of the drama department and play director, said, "We are very happy and excited in presenting this play which was premiered last year at Brigham Young University."

The play is "The Red Plush Parlor," and takes place in the early days of Utah. It features the family of Lars Knudson, his six wives and children.

"This is a warm, wholesome, gay sort of play which will be enjoyed by the audience from the moment the wives sing their first song in the first scene to the final act," Prof. Watson said. "In fact, I think the cast will enjoy it as much, if not more, than the spectators."

The book was by Christie Lund Coles, well-known authoress in the Church. The music was done by Larry Bastian of Brigham Young University, with adaptation by Lael J. Woodbury, also of BYU.

Under auspices of the public relations department at the college the play will tour the Portland area and eastern Washington the week of Nov. 14.

... Dr. David Chugg is musical director for the play, with Inga Johnson in charge of choral work. Robert Nelson in technical director. All are members of the Ricks Faculty.

Die Fledermaus, by Johann Strauss, was presented at Ricks 8, 9, and 10 December 1966. The music was under the direction of LaMar
Barrus and the staging by Lynn Benson. Doctor Hill, head of Humanities at Ricks, stated the following: "Ricks has presented opera for the past six years, one of the few schools in the country to do so, especially among junior colleges."78

A play with a dramatic punch is the way Prof. Lynn Benson describes "A Doll's House," written by Henrik Ibsen in 1879, and being produced at Ricks College Feb. 2-11.

Prof. Benson has announced the cast and said the play, a theatre-in-the-round production, will be presented eight nights with curtain time at 8 p.m. The play will not be presented Sunday evening and Tuesday evening.

... The play will be presented in the Playmill Theatre in the Kirkham Auditorium Building.

... Robert Nelson is technical director for the play and is in charge of construction.79

Another major musical played and toured from Ricks in March of 1967. Lerner and Loewe's Camelot, starring Robert Peterson, who had just completed the Broadway tour of Camelot, was directed by Lyle Watson.80

The musical hit by Lerner and Loewe will be presented at Ricks March 15 through 18, in the Civic Auditorium in Idaho Falls March 21-22, and in the Pocatello High School auditorium March 24-25.81

Jeff Crane and John Adrian, students at Ricks, directed a children's theatre production of Pegora, The Witch. The author and performance dates are unavailable.82

1967 - 1968

Lyle Watson directed Neil Simon's comedy, Barefoot In The Park, which played in the Kirkham Auditorium 21, 22, and 23 September.83

In November Humperdinck's opera, Hansel and Gretel was staged in the Kirkham Auditorium.

The production staff for the Ricks College opera, "Hansel and Gretel," being produced Nov. 1-4 in Kirkham Auditorium, has been announced by Dr. Chester Hill, head of music.
Prof. Lyle Watson, head of drama at Ricks, is director of the three-act opera, with Prof. LaMar Barrus, musical director; Prof. Lynn Benson, stage director; Inga Johnson, choral and vocal director; Robert Nelson, designer and technical director; Robert Oliphant, choreography; Alan Bossard, sound and lighting; . . . 84

Maxwell Anderson's _Winterset_ was presented 7, 8, and 9 December 1967 in the Kirkham Auditorium. The play was directed by Lyle Watson. 85

Shakespeare's _Julius Caesar_ received an interesting staging in the Playmill choir room in the Kirkham building, by director Lynn Benson. The play, presented 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17 and 18 February 1968, was played on a Nazi cross, with the actors dressed in German army costumes. 86

Delta Psi Omega, the drama club, presented _Alice in Wonderland_, an adaptation of Lewis Carroll's story by C. R. Chorpenning. The play was directed by Robert Nelson's wife, Kathleen. 87

Rodgers and Hammerstein's _The King and I_ was the musical chosen this year. Playing the leads would be Karen Chandler and Lynn Benson, paired for the second time as leads in a Ricks College musical. 88

The musical _[The King and I]_ will be produced in Idaho Falls in the Civic Auditorium March 15-16, followed by performances in the Boise Valley March 19-20, and in the Kirkham Auditorium at Ricks College March 22 and 23 and March 25 and 26. 89

1968 - 1969

A pageant entitled "Light on the Hill," under the direction of Lynn Benson, was presented in October during homecoming week, in commemoration of the school's eightieth birthday. On the program as narrators were Lyle Watson and Kay Wilkins. 90
Austin Strong's *Seventh Heaven* was directed by Lynn Benson during the fall of 1968, but the exact dates are not available in the data.91

"KISS ME KATE" CAST ANNOUNCED AT RICKS

The cast, including two Broadway stars, a Ricks College professor of dance, and Ricks students, has been announced for the Broadway musical, "Kiss Me Kate," being presented by Ricks in Rexburg and Idaho Falls. Prof. Lyle Watson is director.

The musical, by Cole Porter, based on Shakespeare's "Taming of the Shrew," will be produced at Ricks in the Kirkham Auditorium Oct. 23-26 and in the Civic Auditorium in Idaho Falls Nov. 6-7. The Broadway hit also will be presented four nights in the Valley Music Hall in Salt Lake City Oct. 30-31 and Nov. 1-2.

Robert Peterson and Melva Niles have interrupted their tour of "From Broadway With Love," to star in the musical as Fred Graham and Lilli.

Taking the part of Bill Calhoun is Robert Oliphant, director of dance at Ricks. Oliphant also directs the choreography for the two-act musical.92

Amahl and the Night Visitors, by GianCarlo Menotti, was directed by Lynn Benson. The choral work was under the guidance of Inga Johnson, with choreography by Robert Oliphant and sets by Robert Nelson. The opera performed 5, 6, and 7 December 1968, in the Kirkham Auditorium.93

With Paul Mortensen as the director and Fraundsie Patte as his assistant, the student members of Delta Psi Omega produced their annual children's show, *Seven Little Rebels*. It performed in Rexburg on 17, 20, and 21 January 1969 in the Kirkham Auditorium. The play then traveled to Soda Springs, Idaho, for two performances on 23 January.94

The 1968-69 season brought an additional facility to the use of the drama department at Ricks (Fig. 23).

A new theatre-in-the-round, called the Playmill Theatre, has been completed at Ricks College and will be used for the first play of the 1969 drama season in February.

Prof. Lyle Watson, chairman of the Ricks Drama Department, said the theatre is in Building T-30 College Boulevard across from the Taylor Garage.
"The theatre will be used by the drama department until the day comes when a fine arts building is constructed on campus," Prof. Watson said.

The theatre will hold 150 persons. The director said it isn't completely a theatre in the round because there are seats only on three sides.

The theatre will be used in place of the choir room at Ricks where the Playmill theatre has been operating for several years.

Why Playmill Theatre? Prof. Watson said the name goes back to a number of years at Ricks to the time when the plays were presented in the gymnasium and Prof. William Kauffman was director of drama.

"We have just the name ever since that time," he said.

The new theatre also is used for classes in various academic areas as well as drama. It also serves as a second rehearsal hall.

The first play to be presented there will be the famous drama by Arthur Miller, "Death of a Salesman." Prof. Lynn Benson of the drama department will direct the play to be presented Feb. 1 through 15, excluding Sunday and Tuesday nights. Curtain time is 8 p.m.

"I think the theatre will be a good thing for the department as it will give us something we can call our own, and for the public, it will mean a good seat wherever they sit and they will be right where the action is,"

Because of the success of Death of a Salesman in the new Playmill Theatre building, the run was extended two nights on 17 and 19 February 1969.

Robert Nelson, who sketched out the floor plan for the Playmill Theatre in the T-30 building, recalled how the facility came about.

We moved into T-30 in 1968 and were only there three or four years. That was a nice place and I enjoyed that. When I came here we were doing arena stage productions downstairs in the choir room, where the Readers Theatre is now.

The music program began to grow and became a bit negative to us using the choir room. It got harder to get rehearsal time and set up time. It was difficult to arrange. They complained and I didn't like the place, anyway. Lyle and I went to President Clarke. They were closing down the old dorm and we decided the old dining room would make a good arena theatre. So, President Clarke encouraged us. I went with a drawing of how it could be done, the same drawing it was built from, and we talked him into it.

They put it together the way we asked them to build it; gave us access to it and dressing room space. The seats came from one of the old movie theatres downtown, the one where First Security Bank is now, The Elk. Those seats were in storage. They were found tucked away somewhere. They were given to the college, so we just used them. That was one of the conditions that made it possible for us to get it. They didn't want us to spend much money. They could
Fig. 23. "Death of a Salesman," first production in Playmill Theatre on College Avenue, 1969.
never have afforded to buy seats, but they were already on campus. Lynne's office was moved in down there, too, because we taught our acting classes there.\textsuperscript{97}

Lynn Benson also spoke favorably about the Playmill Theatre facility downtown.

At that time they were doing some remodeling, building, and so forth on the housing units here. There was a building called T-30 right downtown, across the street from Taylor Chevrolet. I saw that as a great possibility as a small intimate theatre, where we wouldn't have to do everything in the Kirkham. They were not going to use that building for student housing anymore and I talked to President Clarke about the possibility of arranging for a very small theatre in the round and we finally got that okayed. Then the art department, and a small part of the theatre department, moved into that building.

I taught all my theatre classes there. It was inadequate in many ways, but at least it gave us an opportunity to do something away from the Kirkham Auditorium which I thought was a very good thing.

I enjoyed teaching down there, even though most of the facilities were inadequate—mostly the heat. We were right above the furnace. There was no ventilation, and especially in the winter it would get very warm.\textsuperscript{98}

The next play would be the second musical in the same academic year, and the same musical performed last year in the spring.

**RICKS TO PRESENT "THE KING AND I"**

Movie actor James Shigeta who starred in the "Flower Drum Song" will be featured at Ricks College in the Lyle Watson production of "The King and I."

With Shigeta will be Melva Niles, Broadway star who was seen in the Ricks production of "Kiss Me Kate."

The musical will be produced at Ricks March 20-22 and then will go to the Utah Valley Music Hall in Salt Lake City March 26-29.

Clifford J. Barborka, Jr., production manager, said the Utah Valley Music Hall wanted Shigeta for a starring role, "and because Ricks College talent was so tremendous there with "Kiss Me Kate," that it was a natural to get Shigeta for the Utah appearance and also for the Rexburg performances.

He noted that Miss Niles and Shigeta starred on the West coast two years ago in "The King and I." The musical also was produced last spring at Ricks.\textsuperscript{99}

Robert Nelson designed the scenery and Lyle Watson directed Neil Simon's Star Spangled Girl. The production played in the Kirkham Auditorium on 17, 18, and 19 April 1969.\textsuperscript{100}
The Westgate Playmill Theatre in West Yellowstone, Montana, now owned and operated solely by Professor Benson, opened for its sixth season this summer.

Prof. Lynn Benson of the Ricks College Drama Department has announced the 16 students at Ricks who will take part this summer in the Playmill Theatre in West Yellowstone, Mont.

This is the sixth year for the Playmill theatre where plays are presented each night of the week during the summer except Sunday. Drama credit at Ricks may be earned during the summer by the students, Prof. Benson said.

"This is on the stage work for the students and allows them to actually participate night after night in musicals and melodramas."

The group will present the musical by Jean Kerr, "Goldilocks," along with "Streets of New York," a musical melodrama, and "The Curse of an Aching Heart."

President John L. Clarke spoke of the Playmill giving college credit to students in West Yellowstone.

Another thing that happened during my career was the Playmill in West Yellowstone. I encouraged Lynn; of course there were three or four of them that started it, but Lynn was the only one to stick it out. Lynn wanted to make it a learning experience to give kids credit and so he came to me. It seemed to me as the thing we needed. We always need more laboratory experience in everything we do. So, we got it through the committees to allow credit up there. I've always been proud of that group. A good many of them are Ricks College kids.

This year Robert Nelson took a leave of absence and did graduate work in Colorado, leaving an opening that was filled by former Ricks College student, Roger Harris (Fig. 24). He recounted his experiences at Ricks and Brigham Young University that led to his being employed at Ricks College.

I came back to school [Ricks] in 1961. I did well at everything. My goals were to get a 4.0, letter in a sport, be president of Delta Psi Omega, the drama fraternity, have leads in the plays, and have the 'Best Actor of the Year' award. I wanted to work in radio and be involved in student politics. I knew I had to work my way through school and got a job as stage manager, which was another goal. I accomplished all of those except for the 4.0, which I did get at BYU.
I played the father in the story of Helen Keller's “The Miracle Worker.” Lyle called me in and doubtfully asked if I could play the part and I said I could, and I was the first with my lines memorized. I won the 'Best Actor' award; won the 'Best All-around Drama Student' award; won the 'Best Second Year Drama Student' award; won the Marion Rigby 'Outstanding Student' award. I had a good career here at Ricks. I got acquainted with Kay Wilkins who said, 'Why don't you come back here to teach at Ricks.' Up to that point it had never struck me, though I had thought teaching would be my bag. So I thought seriously about it.

The following year I went to BYU, after our first year at the Playmill Theatre, in 1964-65. They were in the process of moving into the Harris Fine Arts Center. I got a job working in the scene shop and it was only a week or two and they made me the stage manager of the concert hall stage. I spent five years doing that. Two years as a student, working more than full-time, my average was eighty hours. They didn't care. When I graduated in 1966 I was hired full time to be concert hall stage manager. That enabled me to continue working on a masters degree at BYU without any real cost. I broke the law down there, went to school during the day and was at the concert hall at night.

I got my masters degree in August of 1969. In the spring of '69 I got a telephone call from Lyle Watson. He told me Bob Nelson would be on leave that year, and would I consider coming back to Ricks, as they needed someone in technical. Up to that time I had never designed a play. My training was to be a director. The last thing in the world I wanted to do was be a technical director. I still felt that same way. I said, 'Lyle, I have never done that; it scares me to death. I would rather come back to direct a few shows, because I had directed a few at least.' He said, 'The way Ricks College is growing, we're only talking a year or so. Take Bob's place for one year and then in the next year we'll work you into the directing area. They'll be hiring more technical people, anyway. I said I'd think about it.

I was very reluctant to leave. We were very happy at BYU. My wife liked it there; she was teaching in the music department. I was tickled to death to be right where I was. We thought we would never leave. I had a lot of extra-curricular going for me there, too. But I kept thinking of that one goal I had made at Ricks College. Maybe I ought to come back and teach. I knew to teach and direct would open up some doors for me, I thought. So finally July 1, 1969, I came to work for Ricks College.

Three new courses were listed in the 1969-1970 Ricks College catalogue in the Department of Speech, Drama and Broadcast. They included: Introduction to the Disorders of Communication; Normal Development of Human Communication; and Summer Theatre [Playmill].
Lynn Benson directed the first show this season, *Everybody Loves Opal*, by John Patrick. It was staged in the Kirkham Auditorium and played 25, 26, and 27 September.\textsuperscript{105}

The musical for this year was Jerry Herman’s *Hello, Dolly*, starring Dorothy Lamour.

Colorful sets to give "Hello, Dolly," Broadway musical, the taste of America at the turn of the century, will be operated on turntables when Ricks College presents the musical Oct. 29 – Nov. 1 in the Kirkham Auditorium.

The musical, directed by Prof. Lyle Watson, features Dorothy Lamour, Hollywood, and Eric Brotherson, Broadway, who were together on national tour with the musical for almost two years. An all student cast will support the two stars.

... The show will be presented at the Utah Valley Music Hall in Salt Lake City Nov. 5-8.

... Roger Harris, who attended Ricks College and was featured in drama, has returned as set designer and technical director for the drama department.

... Earlier this year Harris designed the scenery for the first Ricks play of the year, "Everybody Loves Opal." He will also design sets for the opera in the spring, "The Merry Wives of Windsor."\textsuperscript{106}

Alan Bossard related what it was like to work with professionals and Dorothy Lamour in particular.

What I found interesting, they would bring these big stars and you'd be scared to death. How would they react? But most would come in and just bend over backwards to be cooperative.

Dorothy Lamour had never done anything at a college; everything was professional. She was very cautious because she felt her whole reputation was at stake. The first few days she was just impossible. I thought this would be a total disaster because she was so uptight, screaming and yelling. Well, she thought she was here with a bunch of amateurs. But then she all of a sudden realized, Hey! These people are pretty sharp and calmed down. She became a delightful person to work with.\textsuperscript{107}

Liam O’Brien’s *The Remarkable Mr. Pennypacker*, performed at the Playmill downtown, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 13 December 1969.\textsuperscript{108}

The three-act comedy [*Pennypacker*] is the first production of the season to be produced theatre in the round. Lynn Benson, drama teacher, directs the dramatic comedy assisted by Carol Crawford, student director.\textsuperscript{109}
Cinderella of Loreland, by Frances Homer, was the Delta Psi Omega production staged in the Kirkham Auditorium 20 January 1970. We think the audience will be happily surprised that 'Cinderella' can be revised so appealingly." So says the cast of "Cinderella of Loreland," this year's children's play performed by Delta Psi Omega, the Ricks Drama Club, tomorrow night in the Kirkham Auditorium at 8 p.m.

Admission for Ricks students is 35 cents with activity card at the door. Delta Psi Omega will present the children's play to area grade-school students. Kathy Spenser and Bonnie O'Mealy directed the play. Robert Peterson directed the building of scenery.

Romeo and Juliet, by William Shakespeare, was presented in the Kirkham Auditorium in February.

The Ricks College Drama Dept., featuring a cast of Ricks students, will present "Romeo and Juliet," under the direction of Prof. Lyle Watson, Feb. 19-21 in Kirkham Auditorium.

Carol Crawford, who played Juliet in the Ricks production of Romeo and Juliet, was invited to New York to play the part at a Catholic boys' school.

Because Carol Crawford, Ricks College drama student, did such an outstanding job in her portrayal of Juliet last month at Ricks, she is now in New York City getting ready to re-create the role at a boys' school operated by the Catholic Church, according to Prof. Lyle Watson, Ricks drama head.

Prof. Watson said Miss Crawford of Beaverton, Ore., was cast in the role of Juliet in the Ricks presentation of "Romeo and Juliet" last month.

"The St. Peter's School for Boys on Staten Island lost its Juliet at the last moment and began searching for a new Juliet," Watson said.

He added that the school heard about Ricks' presentation through a costume house in New York City and sent the school's play director, Russell Siller, to Rexburg to see if Ricks' Juliet would be acceptable.

"He thought Carol did a marvelous job with the role as anyone would know who saw the play, and asked if she would go back and do the role in the school play in New York," Prof. Watson said.

Miss Crawford left by plane last weekend and will be in New York until the play ends Sunday. The play will run Thursday through Sunday.

Miss Crawford will be a guest at the St. Peter's School for girls during the week.

Watson said Miss Crawford will do a wonderful job in the play.
"Not only that, but because of the many fine qualities she has, she will be a credit not only to Ricks College, but to the Church."113

Robert Peterson served as guest artist in March of 1970, playing the part of Falstaff in the opera, The Merry Wives of Windsor. The production was under the direction of Lynn Benson and played in the Kirkham Auditorium on 16, 18, 20 and 21 March.114

Enid Bagnold's The Chalk Garden was the last production of the year under the direction of Lyle Watson, playing 9, 10, and 11 April 1970 in the Kirkham Auditorium.115

1970 - 1971

Five new classes were listed in this year's course catalogue under the Department of Speech, Drama and Broadcast. The courses were: Communicative Processes; Communication Law; Broadcast Advertising; and Remediation of Communication Disorders.116

"ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE" TO OPEN DRAMA SEASON
A three-act drama, "Enemy of the People," by Henrik Ibsen, will start off the 1970-71 drama season at Ricks College.
Prof. Lyle Watson, head of the Ricks drama department, said the play, adapted for the American stage by Arthur Miller, will be presented in Kirkham Auditorium Sept. 24, 25, 26 with curtain time at 8:00 p.m. Prof. Watson will direct.
... The Ricks cast is composed of all students with the exception of Prof. Roger Harris of the Ricks Drama Department who portrays Dr. Stockmann. Prof. Harris is doing the sets for the play.117

Dale Wasserman's Man of La Mancha was produced in the Kirkham Auditorium "November 4-10 and in Idaho Falls on November 11 and 12. Curtain time is 8 p.m."118 Starring in the production directed by Lyle Watson was Robert Peterson as Miguel de Cervantes.119

Lynn Benson directed Thornton Wilder's Our Town, that played at the Playmill Theatre downtown. It was performed the first two weeks in December 1970.120
Fig. 24. Roger Harris.
She Stoops To Conquer, Oliver Goldsmith's play, was directed
by Lynn Benson and played in the Kirkham Auditorium 18, 19, and 20
February 1971. A student writer in the Viking Scroll didn't agree
totally with the director's concept.

"SHE STOOPS" GOOD PLAY DESPITE GROSS MISCASTING

Gross miscasting in the part of young Marlowe detracted from an
otherwise enjoyable presentation of "She Stoops To Conquer," by the
Ricks drama department.

Jay Stoddard did an excellent job as Marlowe, but the imagin­
ation cannot be stretched far enough to picture him as the suave,
handsome gentleman author Goldsmith intended.

Carol Crawford and Marta Maxwell were very convincing as
giggling young ladies with a bad case of starry-eyed romanticism.
Miss Crawford is nearing the close of a very successful career at
Ricks and those in the department consider Miss Maxwell one of the
best talents at Ricks in several years.

Mr. Hardcastle came alive through Claire Wilcox, pacing the
floor and punctuating his lines with a jab into the air.

Not-so-quietly stealing the show were Marsha Ricks and Toni
Masi, whose zany scheming at cross purposes broke up the audience.
Masi's insistent "I'll swear to it" after pilfering his mother's
jewel box insured there would not be a solemn seat in the house.

The rowdy scene at the inn was much too long and from seats in
the house hearing was very difficult, but with those exceptions the
play was well done.

Goldsmith intended his audience to laugh and director Lynn
Benson's players made them do just that.

DRAMA DEPARTMENT WRAPS UP SEASON WITH "I REMEMBER MAMA"

The smell of the greasepaint and the roar of the crowd will be
fading memories after this week's drama department presentation of
"I Remember Mama" Friday and Saturday [18, 19, and 20 March 1971].

The department wraps up its 1970-71 season and several veterans
close their careers with the production of John Van Druten's adap­
tation of Kathryn Forbe's "Mama's Bank Account."

... Director Lyle Watson's troupe will pack bag and baggage
and take the show on tour to Oregon and Washington March 23-27.

The music and drama departments staged The Bartered Bride in
April.

"The beauty of the opera is in the music, and the plot and
language are subordinate to the actors' and musicians' ability to
interpret that music," explained Lynn Benson.

He was referring to "The Bartered Bride," an opera to be
presented through the joint efforts of the drama and music
departments April 15, 16, and 17.

... "The Bartered Bride" will be one of the biggest
productions of the year, with Dr. Richard Robison directing the
choral work, Lynn Benson handling the staging, and Dr. LaMar Barrus in charge of the full symphony orchestra.124

This was the year that Roger Harris was to be worked into the directing area at Ricks, but it didn't work out that way.

Supposedly I was to direct here [Ricks] after that first year. It didn't work out that way. The school stopped growing. Bob [Nelson] came back. I helped him and did some technical things that had never been done before. I worked with him and it really grew. I can show you scenery before that time, some of the shows I was in, and you can see a tremendous change in the scenery. We had a tremendous change in budget and finally got some tools. Not because of me, but we worked together, and got a change from what it used to be.

Our department changed, we got a new President of the college, and I was lost in the shuffle, and I am still in technical, which was not to be. I'm still fighting it, considering changing jobs, doing a lot of things, but I'm not happy. I've been here ever since the beginning.125

1971 - 1972

"Theatre Practice" is the only new class offered in the Ricks College course catalogue in the Department of Speech, Drama and Broadcasting.126

The Playmill Theatre in West Yellowstone had just completed their eighth season performing See How They Run, by Phillip King, A Fate Worse Than Death, a western melodrama, and Where's Charley, by Frank Loesser. All the plays were directed by Lynn Benson.127

A new faculty position was created and filled this year by Susan Williams [Whitfield married name] as costumer (Fig. 25). She relates the following information about her background.

I was born in Wilksberg, Pennsylvania, in 1947. My father was in the Air Force, so we traveled, but for high school we lived in Dover, Delaware.

My aptitude test in junior high said I should have something to do with theatre, but I totally ignored that and spent four years of high school in Spanish and two years in Latin, planning on teaching Spanish. I attended Brigham Young University on two scholarships, academic and stake. I was still a Spanish major until I hit 322 that had returned missionaries that could speak the language better
Fig. 25. Susan Williams Whitfield, in Kirkham Costume Shop, 1982.
than I could. I was also working in the costume shop with Beverly Warner. I found that was something I did have an aptitude for and could do and do well. So, I changed my major just like that to clothing and textiles, minor ing in drama in which I got my bachelors degree in 1969.

Then I taught at BYU for a year, replacing Beverly Warner while she went on sabbatical. That summer I started my masters degree in dramatic arts with a minor in art history. I graduated in August of 1971 with my MA and came to Ricks College.

I had worked with Roger Harris who called me and said, ‘We are looking for a costume designer at Ricks; why don’t you apply?’ I applied and things fell into place.

When I arrived at Ricks College the only facility was my office, off of the ballroom, and the only sewing machine available was my own. They didn’t have a budget for costumes my first year; it was strictly beg, borrow, or steal! I remember making a vest for the “Fantasticks.” I think we used that flannel vest in about every show we did in some form or another through the whole year.

Tom Jones and Harvey L. Schmits’ The Fantasticks was the first production of the new season.

Tonight is opening night for the Ricks College Drama Department’s first production of the year.

The play, “The Fantasticks,” a musical about two people in love, is scheduled tonight and Saturday night [August 27 and 28] in the Kirkham Auditorium. Tickets can be obtained at no charge from the cashier’s office.

After its engagement on campus, the play will go to the Madison County Fairgrounds where it will be featured Aug. 31 and Sept. 1 and 2.

Lyle Watson was the director of The Fantasticks and the next show of the season.

GOZ TO STAR IN “FIDDLER ON THE ROOF”

The Broadway star who has played the role of Tevye in “Fiddler on the Roof” more times than any other star has been signed for the Ricks College production set for Rexburg and Idaho Falls.

Harry Goz will star in the Ricks College production of the famous Broadway hit.

The play, about Tevye, the dairyman, his wife Golde and his five daughters in a small village in Russia in 1905, will be staged at Ricks Oct. 27 through Oct. 30 and the following week in the Civic Auditorium in Idaho Falls, Nov. 4-6.

“We are most happy that Goz will be with us for this wonderful play that excites us all,” commented Prof. Lyle Watson, head of drama at Ricks and director of the annual musicals at the college.

“In line with our policy of the past several years, to bring to this area and to our musical production the added interest of top
professionals, we are truly pleased to have been able to sign perhaps the most outstanding star of all."

... Prof. Watson said local audiences now will be able to see Broadway's most durable and exciting Tevye.

... Goz has performed the role of Tevye more than 700 times.130

Alan Bossard shared his thoughts concerning working with Harry Goz at Ricks.

Harry Goz had been playing the role of Tevye for I don't know how long on Broadway. I guess it would really be difficult for someone to come in like that to whole new blocking and he could see ways that would be better. I thought this could really be between he and Lyle Watson, but rather than say we did it this way, he would get with Lyle afterwards, and would never say anything in front of anyone but with Lyle, and say it could be done this way. I'm not saying which way is best, but you could look at it this way. Lyle would look at it and on some of it say you're right, let's do it your way. The students never knew that was going on. Totally the director was in charge. It was a delightful experience.131

The part of Golde, Tevye's wife, was played by Melva Niles, who had appeared at Ricks in Kiss Me Kate and The King and I with James Shigeta.132

The next production of the season was Arthur Miller's The Crucible, staged in the round at the Playmill downtown on College Avenue. The play, directed by Lynn Benson, played 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 December 1971.133

For the seventh year in a row, the Delta Psi Omega presented a children's production. Winnie the Pooh, by A. A. Milne, was directed by Mrs. Robert [Kathleen] Nelson and performed in the Kirkham Auditorium 22 January 1972.134

William Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream was directed by Lyle Watson and played in the Kirkham Auditorium 10, 11, and 12 February.135
Lynn Benson directed and performed the role of Ko-Ko in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*. Performed in the Kirkham Auditorium, "The Mikado" played 16, 17, and 18 March 1972.\textsuperscript{136}

The final production of the season was Phillip King's *See How They Run* at the Playmill Theatre on College Avenue. Lynn Benson was the director with Roger Harris playing the role of the Russian spy and Robert Nelson as the Bishop of Lax. It played on 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, and 22 April 1972.\textsuperscript{137}

This would mark the end of Lyle Watson's chairmanship of the drama department at Ricks College. He came to Ricks in 1957 and became acting head of the department in 1958. His years of service are marked with growth and progress for theatre on the campus of Ricks College.
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Roger Harris, interviewed in his college office, Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho, 30 December 1981.


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121 Ibid., 13 February 1971.
122 Ibid., 26 February 1971.
123 Ibid., 19 March 1971.
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127 Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 10 September 1971.
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Fig. 26. Robert Nelson in Snow Building Scene Shop, 1982.
CHAPTER IX

ROBERT W. NELSON

In the fall of 1971 John L. Clarke retired as president of Ricks College, after twenty-seven years in office. His successor, Henry B. Eyring, appointed a new head for the Department of Speech, Drama, and Radio, in the fall of 1972.¹

In 1972-73 school year I [Kay Wilkins] was made department coordinator, where I served five years. When I was coordinator we split the department to "Dramatic Arts" and "Communications." We found it was a real advantage to split the two and coordinate efforts. Robert Nelson was the first coordinator in drama. We also had journalism as part of the communications department. I've had very little to do with theatre since being on the faculty, outside of being coordinator.²

Robert Nelson (Fig. 26) related how his chairmanship of the "Dramatic Arts" came about.

Kay [Wilkins] wasn't so interested in administering to every single area, so instead of organizing it like Lyle had done, Kay assigned one of us to be in charge of one of the areas as a sort of supervisor. He put me in charge of the drama area. That's when my influence was felt. I was under Kay until November of 1973, and then I became chairman until August of 1981.³

Personal biographical information pertaining to Robert Nelson can be found in the Lyle Watson chapter under the heading 1964-65.

1972 - 1973

You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown, a musical by Clark Gesner based on the comic strip characters of Charles M. Schultz, was the first production staged at Ricks this season. The play performed 27, 28, 29,
Steve Covington and Thomas McKinney were the two professional people brought to campus to star in *1776*, as John Adams and Benjamin Franklin. The Peter Stone and Sherman Edwards musical was directed by Lyle Watson with Roger Harris, lighting designer, and Robert Nelson, scenic designer. The show performed in Rexburg on 1, 2, 3, and 4 November 1972 in the Kirkham Auditorium. The next week it played in Idaho Falls, Idaho, in the Civic Auditorium on 9, 10, 11, and 12 November.5

Lynn Benson next directed Barry Stavis' play, *Lamp at Midnight*. The show performed 6, 7, 8, and 9 December 1972 in the Kirkham Auditorium.6

The play has its own problems for set designer Robert Nelson and lighting effects director Roger Harris, both of the Ricks drama department.

... Prof. Harris said the sets and lighting are "fairly close" to what we would want them to be. "But," he added, "we have limited facilities. Where there would be 300 to 400 lights on the Broadway production, we have 25. But we try to create as much illusion as we can with the facilities available to use," Harris said.7

*Lamp at Midnight* starred John Wilkinson of Idaho Falls, who received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Utah.8

**ASSEMBLY TO FEATURE "CHRISTMAS PLAY"**

Thursday's assembly at 2 p.m. [December 13] in the John W. Hart Physical Education building will feature the play "Christmas Carol," better known as "Scrooge," by Charles Dickens.

... "This play has become what you might call a classic tradition at Ricks College," stated Lynn Benson, producer.

... The cast will include Prof. Watson as Harley's Ghost; Roger Harris as the Ghost of Christmas Past; Lee Gifford as the Ghost of Christmas Present; and Larry Winterstein as the Ghost of Christmas yet to come. Benson will play the part of Scrooge.9

*Christmas Carol* was presented as a reader's theatre, not a full production.
Butterflies are Free, by Leonard Gershe, was directed by Lyle Watson and performed in the Kirkham Auditorium 14, 15, 16, and 17 February 1973.

Two one-act operas were presented together on 14, 15, 16, and 17 March 1973 in the Kirkham Auditorium.

"Cavalleria Rusticana" and "Down in the Valley," two operas with contrasting styles, will be presented next Wednesday through Saturday in the Kirkham Auditorium.

Only through the inspiration of great leadership could so many immature musicians be brought to such a maturity of expression. Hats off to Producer Robert Powell, Musical Director Dr. Lamarr Barrus, Drama Director Lynn Benson, and their many co-workers and technical crews whose names are too numerous to mention and yet whose labors were vital to the great success of these productions [Cavalleria Rusticana and Down in the Valley].

Lynn Benson directed the final show of the 1972-73 season, which was also the last show to be performed in the Playmill Theatre located downtown in the T-30 building. And They Shall Be Gathered, a play written by Martin Kelley, a former Brigham Young University student, tells the story of missionaries for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Armenia during the first decade of this century. The production played 18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, and 28 April 1973.

Lynn Benson recalled the reason for closing the Playmill Theatre downtown.

After four years, one of the Church commissioners or someone, walked thru the building and said this building is a fire trap and closed it. So we did not have a building downtown any longer. So, we had to come back up and do everything in the Kirkham Auditorium.

Robert Nelson related his account of losing the downtown Playmill Theatre.

In 1973 one of the reasons for tearing down T-30 was it was a fire trap. The boilers and furnace downstairs were not adequately protected. They were constantly overheating. Another reason, President Eyring said it will make it tough for you guys in drama
for a while, but the only way to get a new building is to get rid of that one down there. Then you'll be in a crunch and we'll have to do something for you.

When they decided to tear that building down, we were in a real frustration. We didn't know what to do. There went our arena theatre and the music department was not going to let us do anymore productions in the choir room. It was so nice having us out of there, there was no way they would let us back in. We studied all kinds of places—in fact they were going to close down arena theatre productions for a number of years until we had our new building that was being planned. Because we felt arena productions were an important part of our program we decided we would just do a temporary situation down in the ballroom. That temporary situation led to the permanent theatre being just where it is.¹⁵

Susan Williams Whitfield recalled her meager step up in the costume department this year.

The second year we moved in and took over the kitchen off the ballroom. Yes, they still used the kitchen and that had priority. If there was a banquet, we had to move everything back into my office. The second year I was here we did two operas, "Cavalleria Rusticana," and "Down in the Valley." We were having a real hard time getting the costumes done with just one machine, so the school purchased a new Bernina that we could trade off every year. Finally we got another machine and worked with three for quite a while.¹⁶

1973 - 1974

Rudolph Besier's The Barretts of Wimpole Street opened the theatre season at Ricks this year under the direction of Lyle Watson.

Called one of the most famous plays of the modern theater, "The Barretts of Wimpole Street" will be produced at Ricks College September 26 through September 29 as part of the Entertainment Series.

... The play will be presented at 8 p.m. the four days in the Kirkham Auditorium.

The costumes will depict the period in which the action takes place and will be supervised by Susan Williams of the Ricks drama department.

Roger Harris, another drama faculty member, will be in charge of set design. Robert Nelson of the department will be in charge of lighting.¹⁷

The musical chosen for this year was No No Nanette, with book and lyrics by Otto Harbach and Irving Caesar, and music by Vincent Youmans.
Lyle Watson is directing the three act musical comedy with Bob Nelson designing and constructing the set, Bob Oliphant arranging the choreography, Dr. LaMar Barrus taking the orchestra and Ingeborg Johnson as choral director. Susan Williams is in charge of costumes. Susan McMurray is serving as an assistant to the directors.

The Broadway musical "No No Nanette" will be performed at Ricks college Nov. 2 and 3 and the following week, Nov. 7-10.

Mrs. McThing, by Mary Chase, was directed by Lyle Watson and played in the Kirkham Auditorium 6, 7, 8, and 9 February 1974.

Lyle Watson next directed Robert Bolt's *A Man For All Seasons*, that played in the Kirkham Auditorium on 13, 14, 15, and 16 March 1974.

Lyle Watson directed all the shows during the current season, while Lynn Benson took a sabbatical leave and studied at the University of Utah. During the summer of 1973, Lynn Benson opened the Playmill Theatre in West Yellowstone, for its tenth season. The building was remodeled this year, allowing an additional one hundred seats. The productions for the summer were, Jerry Herman's *Hello, Dolly*, Merideth Wilson's *The Music Man*, and a melodrama, *The Drunkard*.

**1974 - 1975**

The planning for the new fine arts center on campus had been going on for several years. Robert Nelson related some of the circumstances leading up to the building's current status in 1974.

The whole time that I have been here, the new facility has been in the process of being planned. The very minute I arrived on campus we were revising those requirements for building space.

When I came, President Clarke interviewed me for the job. He said, 'The nice thing is about it, Bob, in five years you'll have your new building!' In those five years we were involved in the planning of it. I think it was the third priority building and they kept slipping it out of their priorities.

I went on leave in 1969-70, and when I got back we really went in earnest in planning the building. It had to be a total of one hundred and twenty-five thousand square feet, for art, music, drama...
and speech. We couldn't get it down and there was a real battle. We all voted out the idea of a revolving stage to face the different audiences, yet when it went to Salt Lake City they reinstated that back in. So, it killed the whole building project. That was about the time President Eyring came. When he came he just told us to hold off, reassess everything. It was about a year and a half before we got moving again.

By the fall of 1974 we began redoing the third or fourth draft of program requirements, which we had been doing since time in memorial. Requirements are the written documents supporting all of the space needed. We completed those that fall semester. Then we hired a consultant, Horace Robinson, from the University of Oregon at Eugene. He was probably one of the better known people in the area as a theatre consultant. He came over for a day.

What the plan was then was to remodel this building [Kirkham] and turn it into the theatre department, and that was what he was telling them to do. During that semester they decided it would be impractical to do what he said should be done. We were going to add a fly loft. The chief thing that he did was convince them we really did need a fly loft.

President Eyring hired him [Horace Robinson] to come when they decided they had to build a new building, because they couldn't build a theatre over here [Kirkham]. The cost would have been one and a half million dollars to take out the stage area and go down to the footings. Also, they couldn't remember exactly where a big lava cave was. It was under this building. When they dug the hole for the foundation of this building there was a huge room, equivalent to the reader's theatre, they had to fill with concrete. There were a set of drawings for remodeling this building [Kirkham] with an arena theatre by the Northwest entrance. They decided the cost for demolishing was just too great.

We told President Eyring the building was going to be here for years and years and years, and if they were going to go to the expense of building an entirely new building to replace this one that we really shouldn't make any mistakes, we should do it right.

In January of 1975 they sent us on a tour of a dozen theatres for consideration. There had been some traveling before, Kay Wilkins and Bob Powell of the art department looked at buildings in the Los Angeles area. We began at the University of Idaho over to Spokane, down to Portland, and down the Oregon coast.

We went to Eugene, Oregon, and saw the Lane Community College Theatre. That's the one ours is based on more than any other theatre. Then we saw the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Ideas for Lane Community College came from the Shakespeare theatre in Ashland. Then we went to San Francisco.

The music department wrangled some funds to go back east and look back there. They were in Ohio at Overland College, which is the place LaMar [Barrus] wanted them to pattern the new concert hall after.

The architects were hired by this time. They flew representatives to Portland from Ohio. I met them and we drove to Lane Community College, so the architect could see it.

In the planning LaMar wanted a fine acoustical hall, so he suggested they hire Branic and Newman as acoustical consultants.
They had a theatre consulting wing in their company, so they sent out a theatre consultant as well. He assisted in the planning of the Snow theatre. He knew what we wanted, and took it from there.

When the plans were all done they totaled one hundred and fifteen thousand feet, even though they had cut out a lot of our facilities and were going to put us [drama] in the remodeled Kirkham building. The edict was they had to cut down to eighty thousand feet, which was finally accomplished.

On the master plan the building showed up on the top of First East and Third South, where the green belt area is now, up by the tennis courts. We complained that if we were to be split into the two buildings, that was a terrible distance to put us at.

It was decided about 75 or 76 where it was to be built. They didn't tell anyone they were going to tear down the old gym.23

Even though the "Dramatic Arts" department was now separated from speech and broadcast, the course catalogue for 1974-1975 still included the dramatic courses under the heading of "Department of Speech, Drama, and Broadcast." The new courses added this year include: Audiology; Radio Programming and Production; Clinical Methods of Audiology; and Observation of Clinical Practice in Speech and Pathology.24

The first production of the season was a Latter-day Saint musical, Saturday's Warrior.

A moving play that tells the story of the Mormon belief in the pre-existence and promises and vows made there and their fulfillment in earth life is the musical at Ricks College, "Saturday's Warrior," which played three nights last week [10, 11 and 12 October] and is scheduled for three more performances this week [16, 17 and 18 October 1974].

The musical, directed by Lyle Watson of the Ricks drama department, was acclaimed by audiences as tender, funny, a play with a message, and a play that apparently has the ability to touch the hearts of all who see it.

... Douglas Stewart of Brigham Young University's motion picture department is author of the play which was described by a cast member as "an inspired work." Lex de Azevedo, who has composed music for television and motion pictures, wrote the music which includes the theme song, "Saturday's Warrior."

... Robert W. Nelson, head of drama at Ricks, was in charge of scene and light design. Sound director was Alan Bossard. Inga Johnson was vocal coach and Susan Williams was in charge of costume design.25
Because of the successful run of Saturday's Warrior, it was held over for two more performances on 25 and 26 October 1974.

A new drama club was organized this year and named 'Act I.' The club's president, Shawana Rasmussen, said:

Act I is a fairly new club on campus, having been organized in the winter semester of 1974. They meet every Thursday at 6:30 p.m. in Kirkham 110. Meetings often include theatre workshops, some of which will be Oriental theatre, directing, acting, make-up, and theatre through the ages.

Lyle Watson next directed Neil Simon's The Prisoner of Second Avenue. The production was staged in the Kirkham Auditorium and played 6, 7, 8, and 9 November 1974.

The first theatre in the round production staged in the Kirkham Ballroom was under the direction of Lynn Benson. Karel Capeck's Rossum's Universal Robots played 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, and 14 December 1974.

JOAN OF ARC STORY PORTRAYED

"The Lark," written by French playwright Jean Anouilh and adapted by Lillian Hellman will be presented by the Ricks College Drama Department Feb. 5-8 at 8 p.m. in the Kirkham Auditorium. This version of the Joan of Arc story is one of the best, stated Lynn Benson, who is directing the production.

The Merry Widow was the opera chosen for production on 12, 13, 14, and 15 March 1975, in the Kirkham Auditorium. The opera was directed by Inga Johnson, assisted by Lynn Benson and Robert Oliphant. Doctor LaMar Barrus directed the orchestra.

The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams was the final production to be staged in the Kirkham Auditorium this season. Under the direction of Lyle Watson, it played 3, 4, and 5 April 1975. Karen Rich, who was cast in the part of Amanda, was killed in an automobile accident on 6 April 1975. All involved with the production were shocked.
and saddened by her death, but because the show had been double cast, The Glass Menagerie went on with its scheduled performances.32

The summer of 1975 marked the first year the Playmill Theatre in West Yellowstone would host a guest director from Brigham Young University. This step allowed for the teaching of formal classes, for which the students enrolled in the Playmill were able to obtain Brigham Young University credit, as well a Ricks College credit. The guest director that year was Max Golightly, who directed the musical comedy, The Boyfriend. Other shows at the Playmill that season were Fiddler on the Roof, book and lyrics by Sheldon Harnick, music by Jerry Bock; and a melodrama, Because Their Hearts Were Pure.33

1975 - 1976

"Department of Dramatic Arts" was the official title for the drama department in the 1975-1976 course catalogue. The courses included in the department were:

Speech Coaching
Introduction to the Theatre
Oral Interpretation of Literature
123 Acting
124 Acting
Make-Up
Stage Craft
Theatre Practice
The Beginning Director
Summer Theatre34

The first production of the season was staged the second week in November. A bicentennial musical entitled "The Title of Liberty" was presented in the Kirkham Auditorium with the joint effort of three Rexburg stakes and three Ricks College stakes. The exact dates of performance and other related data are not included in the printed sources available.35
Edward Percy and Reginald Denham's **Ladies in Retirement** was staged in the Kirkham Ballroom.

"Ladies in Retirement," a three act murder mystery, concluded its eighth performance Saturday night in the Kirkham Ballroom and comments have been all praise for the small nine-member cast and their director.

The theater-in-the-round production was nearly filled to capacity each night of performance. The play began showing December 3 and continued through December 6. Its second week of performance began on December 10 and continued through Saturday night [December 13].

Lynn Benson, director of the play, said it was one of the "stronger shows I've directed" and praised the cast for their ability to work together.36

With Lyle Watson as the director, Robert Nelson as scenic designer, Susan Whitfield as costume designer, and Alan Bossard as sound engineer, Ricks College next produced Robert E. Sherwood's **Abe Lincoln in Illinois**. It played in the Kirkham Auditorium 4, 5, 6, and 7 February 1976.37

"THREADS OF GLORY" TO PREMIER MARCH 10

"Threads of Glory," the Bicentennial musical written by the authors of "Saturday's Warrior," Doug Stewart and Lex de Azevedo, will premiere March 10 at Ricks College, according to Lyle Watson, director.

The production, based on Elder Mark E. Petersen's book, "The Great Prologue," will be presented March 10, 11, 12, and 13, with additional performances the following week [16, 17, and 18 March 1976] in the Kirkham Auditorium.

... "We are very happy the authors allowed us to present the premiere performance at Ricks," said Watson. He noted that a number of Bicentennial productions were presented to Church authorities by various authors. "Threads of Glory" was chosen for the official Bicentennial performance of the Church.38

Faculty members included in the **Threads of Glory** production were Lee Gifford and Elizabeth Bossard.39

The final production for the year was **You Can't Take It With You**, by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman. Directed by Lynn Benson, the play was staged in the Kirkham Ballroom in the round, and played 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, and 17 April 1976.40
1976 - 1977

An article in the Viking Scroll reviewed some of the happenings at the Playmill in West Yellowstone during the summer of 1976.

The theatre was started 13 years ago by four Ricks College professors: Lynn Benson, Lee Gifford, Lyle Watson, and Roger Harris. It was begun primarily to give L.D.S. youth the opportunity to do summer stock theatre work without being subject to the environment that so often accompanies such establishments.

Today the Playmill is owned and operated by Lynn Benson. He and his family live in West Yellowstone, with a new cast each summer. He maintains a rigid standard of dress and grooming along with cabin hours and a strict limit when it comes to weekends away from the theatre. This last summer Professor Benson and the cast members presented three productions: Rodgers and Hammerstein’s “Carousel,” “Fiddler on the Roof,” and a rootin-tootin melodrama called “Ten Nights in a Barroom.”

Each year Professor Benson hires a guest director from another university to come and direct one of the three shows and to teach six or more credit hours of class. The guest director for the 1976 season was Ivan Crosland of BYU. He has appeared in several BYU films and had directed over 30 productions in the last nine years. He taught cast members such courses as “Musical Theatre Acting,” and “Beginning Directing.”

... The cast is selected each year in February or March by auditions. They are chosen according to talent, enthusiasm, ambition, and experience. A tuition of $300 is required, which pays for housing, utilities and 10 credit hours. Many of the cast members have attended Ricks College, but it is not a prerequisite.

September 15, 16, 17, and 18 were the dates chosen for production of the College’s first show this season, The Miracle Worker, by William Gibson. The show was under the direction of Lyle Watson and played in the Kirkham Auditorium.

Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night was directed by Lynn Benson, and played in the Kirkham Auditorium 20, 21, 22, and 23 October 1976. Robert Nelson was scenic designer, with costumes by Susan Whitfield.

Ten Little Indians, a mystery by Agatha Christie, was staged in the Kirkham Ballroom on 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, and 11 December 1976. Lynn Benson was director and Robert Nelson scenic designer.
Sophocles' *Antigone* was directed by Lyle Watson and performed in the Kirkham Auditorium on 2, 3, 4, and 5 February 1977.45

Howard Keel, whose movie and Broadway credits include, *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Carousel*, *Oklahoma*, *Showboat*, *Kiss Me Kate*, and *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* was hired to play the lead in this year's musical, *Shenandoah*. The musical was directed by Lyle Watson and played in the Kirkham Auditorium on 16, 17, 18, and 19 March 1977. Robert Nelson designed the set, with choreography by Robert Oliphant, costumes by Susan Whitfield, sound by Alan Bossard, and the orchestra under the direction of LaMar Barrus.46

*Harvey*, a comedy by Mary Chase, played in the Kirkham Ballroom in the round on 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, and 16 April 1977. The play was directed by Lynn Benson.47

Members of the Texas Opera Theatre Company visited Ricks College on 15 April 1977 and presented *The Marriage of Figaro* in the Kirkham Auditorium.48

**1977 - 1978**

The first production of the new season was Richard Nash's *The Rainmaker*. The play, directed by Lyle Watson, played on 28, 29, 30 September and 1 October 1977.49

*Everyman*, the sixteenth-century morality play, was directed by Lynn Benson and staged in the Kirkham Auditorium on 9, 10, 11, and 12 November 1977.50

Lyle Watson next directed the first theatre-in-the-round musical since *The Fantasticks* in 1971. *Little Mary Sunshine*, by Rick Bisoyan, was presented in the Kirkham Ballroom on 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16,
and 17 December 1977. Playing the part of Little Mary Sunshine was Jolene Benson, Lynn Benson's daughter.51

DRAMA DEPARTMENT PRESENTS "THE MISER"

"The Miser," starring Lynn Benson in the classic comedy, will be staged on February 22 through the 25th. "The Miser" was written by the famous French writer, Moliere, in 1650 and is ranked as one of five greatest plays that Moliere wrote.

The play will be directed by Lynn Benson and the other characters in the play will be from the drama department of Ricks.52

Carmen was presented by the Music and Drama departments on 15, 16, 17, and 18 March 1978.53

Many people and staff of Ricks College worked on the production of this opera [Carmen] to make it a success. Music director was LaMar Barrus, stage director was Lyle Watson, opera workshop was Inga Johnson, chorus director was Richard Robison, stage design was Robert Nelson, costume designer was Susan Whitfield, and choreography was done by Robert Oliphant.54

1978 - 1979

Robert Nelson designed the set and Susan Whitfield the costumes for Cheaper By The Dozen, by Frank Gilbreth and Ernestine Gilbreth Carey. Lyle Watson directed while Roger Harris and his wife, Gwyn, starred as Mr. and Mrs. Gilbreth. The play was staged in the Kirkham Auditorium and played 4, 5, 6, and 7 October 1978.55

Lynn Benson directed Austin Strong's Seventh Heaven for the second time since coming to Ricks College. The play performed in the Kirkham Auditorium on 1, 2, 3, and 4 November 1978.56

Roshomon, translated by Fay and Michael Kanin, was Lynn Benson's second repeat for this season. The play performed 7, 8, 9, and 10 February 1979 in the Kirkham Auditorium. Benson directed the play in 1965 as well.57

Dale Wasserman's Man of La Mancha was the next production of the season and the last production for Lyle Watson at Ricks College.
The musical that played in the Kirkham Auditorium 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, and 17 March 1979 was assistant directed by Fred Norman of Boise State University. The following article praising Watson appeared in the Viking Scroll.

Long-time drama director of Ricks, Lyle Watson, has received an unexpected honor. The upcoming musical, Man of La Mancha, is being dedicated to him.

"I'm honored. I've been here a long time, and from that standpoint, I am pleased about it," Bro. Watson says. "I resisted the idea of the show being dedicated to me a great deal when Fred Norman first talked about it. I went along with him because he said he would only work under those circumstances."

"I am really thrilled that the cast has decided to dedicate the show to Lyle. I feel any time any individual dedicates a lifetime toward the excellence of an art or any other endeavor, this kind of recognition is not only needed, but at times demanded," says Norman, guest director.

... Man of La Mancha was presented at Ricks in 1970. Robert Peterson starred then as he will in the March production.

... "I think it is great that this show is being dedicated to Lyle Watson," Peterson smiled. "I think it should be. I am pleased about the decision because he deserves it."

Bro. Watson says he has always felt he would rather have students honored than have cast members honor him.

"I just feel that students work so hard and if there is any honor coming, I would like to see them have it."

In the program for Man of La Mancha, Gary Olsen, the entertainment series chairman, wrote this tribute to Lyle Watson.

TO OUR DIRECTOR

Tonight's production is being dedicated by the cast to the Director, Lyle Watson. Since he came to Ricks College 21 years ago, Lyle's accomplishments in the theatre are many. The pleasure he has brought to thousands of people is recognized through this dedication.

It is especially fitting that this honor should come with "Man of La Mancha," one of those productions he has directed which he admits are "favorites." Lyle had directed 24 musicals, including such favorites as "King and I," "Hello, Dolly," with Dorothy Lamour, "Fiddler on the Roof," with Harry Goz, and "My Fair Lady." Robert Peterson has starred in "Camelot," "Kiss Me Kate," and the 1970 production of "Man of La Mancha." Lyle has also directed such theatre greats as "Sound of Music," "1776," "I Do, I Do," "Carmen," "Saturday's Warrior," and Howard Keel in "Shenandoah," all of which are memorable occasions, and many, many others.

In addition to the musicals each spring, the theatrical season has been filled with dramas Lyle has directed. With well over 100 productions to his credit, it is difficult to begin to name
memorable performances—"Glass Menagerie," "Cheaper By The Dozen," 
"Auntie Mame," "Barefoot in the Park," "Diary of Anne Frank," 
"Heaven Can Wait," "Man For All Seasons," "Miracle Worker," "Our 
Town," "Barretts of Wimpole Street," "Hamlet," "Taming of the 
Shrew," "Romeo and Juliet," "Antigone" — the list and the memories 
go on.

Lyle has taught Public Speaking; Voice, Diction, and Interpre-
tation; Speech Fundamentals; Debate; English; Introduction to 
Theatre; Makeup; Stagecraft; Acting; Creative Dramatics; Story-
telling; and Lettering at Ricks, and he taught for four years at 
Sugar-Salem High School. He has been Guest Director at Valley Music 
Hall in Salt Lake City, directed many Pioneer Days productions in 
Idaho Falls, at the Music Circus in Island Park, on the Melva Miles 
Show, with the Upper Snake River Players, and co-founder of the 
Westgate Playmill. He has been a popular Judge for pageants in 
cities and states about this area, has received the Distinguished 
Teacher Award (1977), and has served as President of the Rexburg 
Rotary Club (1975-76). He was Department Chairman from 1959 to 1972 
and did much work on the Assemblies Committee from 1963 to 1974. 
Thatcher, Arizona, is his birthplace, and the New England States his 
mission field.

After all of the above accomplishments, the most important 
contribution Lyle has made is still left unmentioned. The many 
people in his life are the real success. His wife and two children, 
the students he has taught, the members of his ward when he served 
as bishop, the business associates, the friends, and the casts and 
crews of every production have had their lives affected in a 
positive way through being with Lyle. For all of this we say thank 
you and look forward with continued anticipation to the future and 
our association with you. To all of this and to you we dedicate 
this performance, and now "On with the show!"60

The final production of the season was Curious Savage, by John 
Patrick. Lynn Benson directed the production that was staged in the 
Kirkham Ballroom and played 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, and 21 April 
1979.61

1979 – 1980

With Lyle Watson's retirement, a faculty position was vacated 
and filled the spring of 1979. Rodger Sorensen (Fig. 27), the man hired 
for that position, related the following biographical information.

I went to Provo High [Utah] and that's when I first became 
interested in theatre. The first play I was in was You Can't Take 
It With You, directed by Ray B. Jones. I didn't get interested 
until I was a senior.
The second play was Lane Bateman's masters production of J.B., up on campus [BYU]. They needed some younger people for the family, so I got a taste of theatre there.

I was heavy into music; that's what I was going into. I graduated from high school in 1967 and went straight to BYU.

I took an acting class from Doctor Metten, who told me it was hopeless. So, I went into Russian. I buried myself in Russian that year. I didn't go to school the next semester. That was during Viet Nam. It was either go back to school or get drafted, which made me more willing to go back to school.

I went to the University of Utah, but they didn't accept me, so I went to night school, just to get out of the draft. I worked days, went to night school, and then I got married in 1969.

When I got married I decided theatre would be the thing to do, so as a sophomore I took theatre and Russian.

I didn't identify too well with the University of Utah and their concept of theatre, so I transferred to the Y.

In 1969 and 70, I went back to BYU, as a sophomore. I worked with Doctor Hansen for a year in his repertory theatre and loved it! We traveled and hit the Pacific Northwest, down to Vegas, Southern California, and Arizona. I went with him on three tours. Most of my theatre courses were through that experience.

My last year there, there were two turning points. I was in the show Karl Malden directed, "The Night of the Prince." Then I took directing the next year and that's where I fell in love with directing.

I took the summer off after graduating [1971] and went right on for a masters in directing. It took two years; Doctor Metten was my chairman. I took a double minor in English Literature and Junior College Teaching. I didn't have any teaching experience, other than the Junior College teaching.

As soon as I graduated I got a job teaching at the College of Eastern Utah in 1972-73. There was a fellow on leave, so I took his position in speech and coached debate. I taught speech and Freshman English Three.

The fellow came back after that year, but I stayed on there another four years as Assistant Dean of Students and taught one English course. I directed two shows a year. They had a one man theatre department and he directed six shows a year, so I lightened the load.

I didn't want to be in administration the rest of my life so I resigned. The whole time I was there I had put out applications, some fifty or sixty each year. Jobs were not available. I planned to work in a coal mine.

Then I found out about this job opening and was very blessed and lucky to get this job. I came here in 1979.62

Work on the new Fine Arts Center was continuing as well this year, with a projected completion for the spring of 1980.

Approximately 3,200 man labor hours have gone into the actual construction of the center since its foundation was laid in April of 1978, explained a construction foreman.
Fig. 27. Rodger Sorensen and Lynn Benson 1982.
However, this $6.25 million project actually began nearly ten years ago when faculty members submitted requests for increased facilities for the music, drama and humanities departments. After years of negotiation, a plan was adopted and approved by the Church Educational System.

Architects Harold Collard and Max Call of Idaho Falls were hired by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to design the center. Early in 1978, 60 blueprints for the project were approved and the actual construction began.

"There's not a seat that will be a bad seat," said Robert Nelson of the Drama Department. The third hall, the drama theater, seats 500. Smaller than the Kirkham Auditorium, the new theater creates a more intimate drama experience.

Prior to the design of the theater, members of the drama faculty visited college facilities in Washington, Oregon, California, and Idaho. They believe they have incorporated the finest features of all the facilities in the drama theater.

"We've probably got the finest theater in the Western United States," said Roger Harris of the Drama Department. The center is equipped with very modern and up-to-date lighting, sound, and set systems. A major improvement over the Kirkham Auditorium is the addition of a full-fly loft which will provide faster and easier set changes.

In spite of the new there is still a bit of the old in the Snow center. The new corner stone laid for the center was laid next to the old corner stone of the gym building that burned down in 1977.

The Snow center is expected to be completed sometime in the spring of 1980 with productions starting possibly that summer.

The first show of the 1979-80 season was directed by Roger Harris. This was the first show Roger had directed at Ricks since he came ten years earlier. All My Sons, by Arthur Miller, was staged by Harris in the Kirkham Auditorium on 3, 4, 5, and 6 October 1979.

Rodger Sorensen directed his first play at Ricks College, in the Kirkham Ballroom in the round. The scenery for Harry Segall's Heaven Can Wait was designed by Robert Nelson, costumes by Susan Whitfield, and sound by Alan Bossard. The play performed on 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, and 15 December 1979.

On October 31 and 1, 2, and 3 November 1979, Arsenic and Old Lace played in the Kirkham Auditorium. The Joseph Kesselring play was directed by Lynn Benson, with scenic design by Robert Nelson, costumes
by Susan Whitfield, sound by Alan Bossard, and the lighting design by Ray Versluys who was a student then but would come to Ricks as a part-time scene shop foreman in 1981.66

Comedy of Errors, by William Shakespeare, was directed by Lynn Benson and played in the Kirkham Auditorium on 6, 7, 8, and 9 February 1980.67

Gilbert and Sullivan's Yeoman of the Guard was directed by Rodger Sorensen and played in the Kirkham Auditorium on 12, 13, 14, and 15 March 1980.68

The Green Pastures, by Marc Connely, was the last production of the season. Directed by Lynn Benson the play was presented in the Kirkham Ballroom 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, and 19 April 1980. As well as directing this reader's theatre, Lynn Benson also played the part of God.69

1980 - 1981

This year was a turning point for the drama department at Ricks College as they moved into the Eliza R. Snow Center for the Performing Arts (Figs. 28-31, 34-35). The building they had been waiting years for was finally completed.

The first production in the new drama theatre was a community production of Annie Get Your Gun, that played several nights around the fourth of July. The official opening production, however, was staged by the Department of Dramatic Arts in October 1980.70

The play chosen to demonstrate the capabilities of the new theatre was Barrie Stavis' Lamp at Midnight. Mr. Stavis was a guest on the Ricks College campus for the Grand Opening of the new theatre. Max Golightly of Brigham Young University was the guest artist who
Fig. 28. Light and sound booths, Snow Drama Theatre, 1982.

Fig. 29. Snow Scene Shop from backstage, 1982.
played the part of Galileo Galilei. Robert Nelson of the Ricks drama department played the role of Cardinal Bellarmin as well as designing the sets. Other faculty members in the show were: Lee Gifford, Kay Wilkins, and Edward Malstrom. John Bidwell, drama director at Madison High School in Rexburg, played the part of Pope Urban VIII. The play was directed by Lynn Benson, who had been with the Ricks College drama department for sixteen years.  

All the theatre productions would be staged in the Snow Drama Theatre this year, while the Kirkham Building was undergoing some remodeling.

The third building completed at Ricks College—The Kirkham Auditorium, 1956—is being remodeled and will have a "new interior look" by this summer, according to Charles Frost, director of plant facilities.

The building, named after the late Oscar Kirkham, a member of the First Council of the Seventy who taught at Ricks from 1903 to 1906, was the center of music and drama for 24 years until remodeling began last year with Shipco General, Inc., the general contractor.

"The remodeling is on schedule and will be completed by July," Frost said. The building will be ready for students when they come to school for the fall semester [1981].

Three new rooms are being built on the west side just adjacent to the Spori Building. They are sculpture and ceramics rooms with a courtyard and area for kilns.

The ballroom is cut in half with the south end being made into a dance studio and the north end a theatre-in-the-round. Separating the theatre the 1,000 seat auditorium, which has been left intact, is a soundproof retaining wall.

Inside on the main floor are men's and women's rest rooms along with an acting room in the former band room. The windows have been removed. There is stage lighting and dressing rooms. The choir room, on the bottom floor, is being changed to a reader's theatre for students interested in dramatic readings and part playing. There is stage lighting and acting areas.

The building will have offices for faculty members of the drama department. Being constructed is a laundry for costumes, along with a costume design shop.

"This building has so much usable space and will be a marvelous addition to our department and the art department," Frost said. The new exterior on the west will harmonize with the rest of the brick exterior.

The only other building on campus older than the Kirkham Auditorium is the Spori Building built in 1906 and used today by the
Communications and Art Departments. The old gymnasium built in 1918 has been replaced by the Snow center for the Performing Arts which faces Center Street on Second Sound.\textsuperscript{72}

Thornton Wilder's \textit{The Matchmaker} was the second college production staged in the new Snow Theatre. Rodger Sorensen directed the play and designed his own lighting. The play, that performed 29, 30, and 31 October and 1, 5, 6, 7, and 8 November, had Robert Nelson as its scene designer and Susan Whitfield as costumer.\textsuperscript{73}

Roger Harris designed the set for director Rodger Sorensen's next production, \textit{J.B.}, by Archibald MacLeish. Susan Whitfield designed costumes and Alan Bossard the sound for the play that performed 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, and 12 December 1980.\textsuperscript{74}

Meredith Wilson's \textit{The Music Man} was the College's first musical presented in the Snow Theatre. The production, under the direction of Lynn Benson, played 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21 February 1981. Roger Harris served as technical director, with Robert Oliphant as choreographer. Inga Johnson was vocal director; Alan Bossard, sound designer; and Susan Whitfield, costumer.\textsuperscript{75}

Rodger Sorensen next directed Shakespeare's \textit{The Merchant of Venice}. The production was staged on 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28 March 1981.\textsuperscript{76}

A life-long dream will come true in March for Benson, well-known actor and director of the area. He will play Shylock in the Shakespeare classic, "The Merchant of Venice." Sorensen will be the director. "What a treat for our patrons with Lynn playing this arch-villain role," Nelson said.\textsuperscript{77}

The final production of the regular season was \textit{Deadwood Dick or The Game of Gold}, an old-fashioned melodrama. Lynn Benson directed the production that played 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 April 1981.\textsuperscript{78}
Fig. 30. Sound equipment, Snow Drama Theatre, 1982.

Fig. 31. House seating, Snow Drama Theatre, capacity 500.
The regular theatre season was over at Ricks, but a new season was about to begin for the first time. The Ricks College Academy Players Summer Repertory Theatre premiered during the summer of 1981. The following is found on page one of the Academy Players summer program.

With the organization of the Academy Players Summer Repertory Theater comes the fulfillment of a long-standing dream of the Ricks College Theatre Arts Department. When the new drama facilities were completed, the faculty felt it was now time to move ahead with the ideas they had been nurturing. So, they wrote a proposal. Ricks College President, Bruce R. Hafen's response was an immediate and enthusiastic approval. The proposal fits President Hafen's own dream. Speaking particularly of the Eliza R. Snow Center for the Performing Arts and paraphrasing a passage from scripture he said, "This building ... is dedicated to pleasing the eye, gladdening the heart, enlivening the soul." He envisions Rexburg because of Ricks College becoming well known as a cultural center drawing many people each year.

The summer theater will become part of the cultural focus for this region and the L.D.S. Church. The sacrifice and dedicated work of this first season Academy players company and faculty are the first contributions to the realization of that dream.

Ray A. Versluys (Figs. 32-33) joined the staff of theatre personnel during this 1981 summer premiere season.

The newest member of the Theatre Arts Department will be acting as the scene shop foreman and stage manager for the next school year. Ray, a former Ricks College graduate, is a graduate of Idaho State University with a B.A. degree in drama. He was converted to the LDS religion in 1971 while living in Iona, Idaho; he is originally from East Moline, Illinois. Ray served a mission in Ohio from 1972-74 and then returned to Iona, Idaho, where he decided to attend Ricks College in January 1975.

While attending Ricks College, Ray was not interested in theatre until after he had graduated. In fact, the only show he was in was "Little Mary Sunshine," in which his role was an 80 year old half blind Indian named Fleetfoot. Ray, however, was active on the technical side, being shop foreman for two years and other crew assignments during the year.

After graduating from Ricks College in '78, Ray decided to enter the theatre world at Idaho State University, where he developed not only his technical experience, but also began to develop his acting abilities. He designed lighting for such shows as "Cabaret," "Mother Courage," "Matchmaker," and "The Marriage of Figaro." While attending ISU he received such honors as being named as Outstanding
Fig. 32. Ray A. Versluys in Snow scene shop, 1982.

Fig. 33. Versluys at computer light board, Snow, 1982.

Rodger Sorensen directed the two musicals performed by the Academy Players this summer. The first, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, by Burt Shevelove and Larry Gelbart with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, opened in mid June. Li'l Abner, the season's second musical by Norman Panama and Melvin Frank with music and lyrics by Johnny Mercer and Gene de Paul, opened shortly after Funny Thing.  

Neil Simon's Chapter Two was the remaining show of their repertory season. Robert Nelson was the director of Chapter Two, as well as scenic designer for all three productions, while Alan Bossard handled the sound, and Rodger Sorensen the lighting designs.  

The Academy Players Summer Repertory Theatre season closed in mid August, completing its first run. The beginning of this new era of theatre at Ricks College also signaled the close of the Robert Nelson era as chairman of the Department of Theatre Arts.  

Under Robert Nelson's leadership the department achieved its goal of a new facility. Speaking of the new Snow Theatre and the remodeled facilities in the Kirkham building, Robert Nelson said:  

Physically we could house a four-year program here. There are a lot of four-year schools that don't have near the facilities that we do.  

One of the major theatre programs in this region, where I worked on my doctorate, is the University of Colorado. It does not compare in any way, shape, or form to what we have got. I figure as far as junior colleges are concerned it has to be in the top five facilities in the whole country.
Fig. 34. Make-up room, Snow Building, 1982.

Fig. 35. "Dracula" set, Snow Drama Theatre, 1982.
1 Kay Wilkins, interviewed in his office, Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho, 4 January 1982.

2 Ibid.


4 Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 29 September 1972.

5 Ibid., 27 October 1972.

6 Ibid., 28 November 1972.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., 12 December 1972.


16 Susan Whitfield, interviewed in her office, Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho, 6 January 1982.


18 Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 26 October 1973.

19 Idaho Falls (Idaho), Post Register, 21 October 1973.
27. Ibid., 31 October 1974.
29. Ibid., 12 December 1974.
31. Ibid., 7 March 1975.
35. Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 21 November 1975.
36. Ibid., 18 December 1975.
40. Ibid., 16 April 1976.
41. Ibid., 24 September 1976.
42. Ibid., 10 September 1976.
43. Ibid., 22 October 1976.
44Ibid., 3 December 1976.
46Ibid., 18 March 1977.
48Ibid., 15 April 1977.
49Ibid., 30 September 1977.
50Ibid., 11 November 1977.
51Ibid., 2 December 1977.
52Ibid., 17 February 1978.
53Ibid., 17 March 1978.
54Ibid.
55Original program, Cheaper by the Dozen, 1978, from Lyle Watson's personal play files, Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho.
56Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 10 November 1978.
57Ibid., 2 February 1979.
58Ibid., 23 February 1979.
59Ibid., 2 February 1979.
60Original program, Man of La Mancha, 1979, from Lyle Watson's personal play files, Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho.
61Ibid.
63Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 23 October 1979.
64Ibid., 3 October 1979.
65Ibid., 5 December 1979.
66Ibid., 31 October 1979.
67Ibid., 20 February 1980.
68Ibid., 19 March 1980.

Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 5 September 1980.

Original program, Lamp at Midnight, 1980, Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho.

Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 20 January 1981.


Original program, J.B., 1980, Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho.


Rexburg (Idaho), Ricks College, Viking Scroll, 5 September 1980.

Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Fig. 36. J. Lynn Benson.
CHAPTER X

J. LYNN BENSON

In the early fall of 1981, J. Lynn Benson (Fig. 36) was made Chairman of the Department of Theatre Arts at Ricks College. Professor Benson came to Ricks in the summer of 1964, and had served as teacher and director for sixteen years upon his appointment. Personal biographical information about Benson can be found in Chapter VIII, entitled Lyle Watson, under the sub-heading 1964-1965.

This was the first year the department was called the Department of Theatre Arts in the annual course catalogue. Before this year it was known as the Department of Dramatic Arts. The following is a list of courses offered in 1981-1982.

Individual Coaching in Dramatic Arts
Introduction to the Theatre
Oral Interpretation of Literature
Acting I
Acting II
Make-Up
Beginning Technical Theatre
Scenic and Lighting Design
The Beginning Director
Theatre Practice
Introduction to Theatrical Costume Design
Summer Theatre*

Only three of these courses have been added since 1975, when the course catalogue recognized the theatre department as a separate entity from speech and communications. "Individual Coaching in Dramatic Arts" was added in 1976-1977, "Introduction to Theatrical Costume Design," in 1979-1980, and "Beginning Technical Theatre" in 1981-1982.
Fig. 37. Light booth, arena theatre, Kirkham Building, 1982.

Fig. 38. Arena Theatre, Kirkham Building, 1982.
The faculty of the theatre arts department moved into the newly remodeled Kirkham Building (Figs. 37-38) in the fall of 1981. This building currently houses all drama teaching and performing activities, other than the scene shop and new drama theatre in the Snow Building. The two buildings together provide a very fine educational facility for theatre. Alan Bossard, who had served as sound technician for all Ricks College theatre productions since 1964, spoke of the new facilities.

The real highlight was to move into the new theatre and all the sound equipment we needed, with all the new innovations. That was a real delight for me.

The theatre in the round [Kirkham] is a beautiful facility soundwise. That used to be a problem. They would do theatre in the round in the ballroom temporarily. We would have to pull some equipment out and put it up on a scaffold so we could see what was going on, and then string wire around so it would work.

Now they have a facility that is all wired in and easy to work with. I don't know if they'll do much in the area of drama anymore in the Kirkham Auditorium itself, but it does have a good sound system.3

When asked if he felt there was a need or demand for a specialized class in theatre sound at Ricks, Professor Bossard responded:

I always have people wanting to come in and take a class that teaches them about studio sound. This is an area that we don't really have any courses available in. I'd love to teach something like that. With the new facility, the technical people do spend some time in the sound room, just a brief orientation, but that's where I pull all my people that work with me. I think there could very easily be a specialized class.4

Susan Whitfield spoke of the facility she now supervises as costume designer.

This is my eleventh year here. When we moved into the Snow we took over an area that was not to be permanently ours, but we worked in the budget somehow, another sewing machine. The nicest thing about being in the Snow was that the facility was all in one area. It wasn't running back and forth.

But now with the remodeled Kirkham facility, we bought two new machines. We have a separate room to keep the washer and dryer, so it is not for public use. We are located in room 110, which used to be the make-up and green room. It's a large square room, and on the
walls are the old kitchen cupboards from the ballroom which gives additional storage space. They put a wall in the prop storage room under the stage, so that part of what used to be props storage is now for costumes. I thought we would have lots of room, but we filled it up.5

Ruth Biddulph, a student of theatre at Ricks in the 1920s and now a retired faculty member of Ricks College, spoke of the department's new facilities.

I've been so delighted with the new facilities they have and glad they have started a summer theatre program. They need to use those facilities, and I think they've got the audience for it. I'm delighted with what they're doing. I think they have some fine directors here now.6

The first show of the 1981-1982 season was You Can't Take It With You, by Moss Hart and George S. Kauffman. Lynn Benson directed the show that played in the Snow drama theatre on 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 October 1981.7

Lion in Winter, by James Goldman, was the play directed by Rodger Sorensen for the opening of the new theatre-in-the-round facility in the remodeled Kirkham Building. Robert Nelson served as scene designer, Susan Whitfield as costume designer, Alan Bossard as sound designer, and Ray Versluys as technical director. The production was staged 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 November 1981.8

The last play staged in 1981 was Eugene O'Neill's Ah, Wilderness! Directed by Rodger Sorensen, the play performed 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, and 12 December 1981.9

Upon his appointment as chairman, Lynn Benson assembled a list of thirty-four goals that were to be pursued by the Department of Theatre Arts during the next five years.

FIVE YEAR GOALS FOR THEATRE DEPARTMENT AT RICKS COLLEGE
1. An adequate recruiting system.
2. More involvement with local high schools.
3. A stronger involvement with each other in the department.  
   A. Each member of the department to host a social.  
4. More involvement with majors in theatre.  
5. More involvement with R.M.T.C.  
6. Invited guests for seminars, guest directors, guest designers, etc.  
7. A better working relationship with department.  
   A. Scheduling board.  
   B. Closer unity with each other.  
8. More meaningful faculty meetings.  
   A. Begin and end on time.  
   B. Act on material that is presented.  
9. Constant upgrading of program.  
10. Develop an inservice program.  
11. Encourage more reading in the department.  
   A. A play a week and report in faculty meeting.  
12. Develop a library of plays, theatre literature, video tapes, etc.  
13. Constantly try to find a better use of our facility.  
14. Encourage better participation to plays from faculty and students at Ricks.  
15. Develop a system for regular planning sessions with the department.  
16. Develop a better method of evaluation of department members.  
   A. visit a class once a week.  
17. A budget for pictures of plays. $100.00 per play.  
18. A showcase to display pictures.  
19. A Ricks Drama Festival.  
20. A closer tie with newspapers. One article about theatre every month in Scroll.  
22. Unify and strengthen the acting program.  
23. Organize the community theatre council.  
24. Improve the quality of teaching by the faculty of this department.  
25. Initiate a Readers Theatre Program.  
26. Plan our season two years in advance.  
27. Improve our public relations/advertising for the entire season.  
28. Keep us within budget.  
29. Improve and continue to support the student Theatre Council.  
30. NAME THE THEATRE.  
31. Improve the efficiency of the shop operation.  
32. Remove classes from Snow Drama Theatre.  
33. Organize and operate our own ticket office.  
34. Full-time building manager.  

Although this history terminates in December of 1981, the following information is provided relevant to the first few months of 1982.
The remainder of the 1981-1982 theatre season was projected to be: Dracula, February 10-13 and 16-20; Rigoletto, March 10, 12, 16, 18, and 20; and The Imaginary Invalid, April 7-10 and 13-17. \(^{11}\)

Lynn Benson and his wife, Fern, received a call from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to serve a full-time mission for the Church in Nauvoo, Illinois. They entered the mission field 14 April 1981, during the run of The Imaginary Invalid, the last show directed by Lynn Benson at Ricks College before entering into the service of his Church.

Lynn Benson plans to return to Ricks College after completing his mission and resume his studies as chairman of the department until his retirement.

With his leaving, a faculty position has opened at Ricks College, which had not been filled at the printing of this thesis.

Rodger Sorenson has been appointed temporary Acting Chairman of the department during Professor Benson's absence.
NOTES

3 Alan Bossard, interviewed in his office, Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho, 4 January 1982.
4 Ibid.
6 Mrs. Ruth Biddulph, interviewed in her home, Rexburg, Idaho, 6 January 1982.
7 Original program, You Can't Take It With You, 1981, Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho.
8 Original program, Lion In Winter, 1981, Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho.
9 Original program, Ah, Wilderness!, 1981, Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho.
10 Copy of original goals, provided by Lynn Benson, 1 April 1982.
CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

This chapter is divided into four areas: physical theatre facilities, faculty, play genres, and suggestions for the future in the Department of Theatre Arts at Ricks College.

Physical Theatre Facilities

The first step towards a suitable facility for theatre was made when the Academy moved into the first building on the present Ricks College campus. This building named after Jacob Spori, was dedicated in 1906. On the top floor was a multi-purpose room that contained a stage. This facility was used until 1911, when the space was remodeled for other academic use. Being without a facility on campus, dramatic performances were housed downtown at the Elk Theatre or Flamm Opera House until 1919, when the gymnasium building was completed.

The new college auditorium was housed on the second floor of the gymnasium building, with the gym above and the swimming pool beneath. When originally built, the auditorium contained ceiling support posts that obstructed the view of some patrons, but these posts were removed in 1927. This adequate facility was used until 1944, when it was remodeled to be used as a music room. There was no facility, nor any plays performed on campus from 1944 to 1948, with the exception of one play staged by the staff of the college newspaper.
In 1948, William Kauffman created a theatre space where there was none. Theatre-in-the-round was given birth at Ricks College in the choir-orchestra room. This acting space was named the Playmill Theatre and served the drama department from 1948 until 1956, when the Kirkham Building was completed.

The Kirkham Auditorium was a big step in the right direction for theatre at Ricks allowing the first proscenium productions in over a decade, but the auditorium lacked wing space and a fly loft. Arena theatre continued to thrive in the Kirkham choir room, but this temporary condition made it extremely difficult to have adequate time for refined technical artistry.

In 1968, an old dormitory building located on College Avenue in Rexburg was remodeled to serve as a semi-permanent location for arena theatre productions. This facility was named the Playmill after the college's original Playmill in the gym building. The theatre was used until 1973, when it was condemned and demolished.

Arena productions then returned to the Kirkham Building where they were staged in the ballroom. This setting required the setting up and removal of all platforms, curtains, masking, lighting and sound equipment after each production. Arena productions were staged in this facility from 1973 through 1980.

In 1980, the Eliza R. Snow Building for the Performing Arts was completed and theatre production moved into one of the finest facilities in any junior college in the Rocky Mountain West. The facility contains a full fly system, revolving stage, hydraulic orchestra pit, and four
acting areas on two levels downstage of the proscenium. The sound, lighting, and shop facilities are equipped with the finest equipment available.

In 1981 the theatre department faculty moved into the newly remodeled Kirkham Building that contains a permanent, well equipped theatre-in-the-round; a studio theatre-classroom; and ample office, costume, laundry, and storage space. There is one disadvantage in the current facilities at Ricks College. It was the original goal of the department that all drama activities would be housed under one roof, but because of expense and the lack of available space in the Snow Building, the drama facilities are split between the Kirkham and Snow Buildings on campus. With this disadvantage comes an advantage, for the actual space provided the theatre program is much greater than it would have been, had the department been successful in their goal of being housed in one building.

The current facilities are not the result of casual happenings, but of the dedicated work and planning by an artistic theatre faculty.

Faculty

In the seventy-six years of theatre history contained in this work, there have been thirty-five instructors or professors involved in its development. All of them have contributed in some way to theatre at Ricks College, but the people discussed here stand out for having accomplished something unique in theatre on campus.

In 1914 Lucile Cannon presented the first original production on campus. The play script was written by members of her elocution class, using George Elliot's novel, "Silas Marner" as source material.
In 1923, Harry Nelson was the first professor to institute a dramatic club on campus. This action has been repeated several times over the years as clubs would fade away into non-existence, and then be reorganized by a dedicated faculty member.

Joseph Catmull was at Ricks College longer than any previous professor of theatre, and was the most academically prepared, having completed his doctorate before leaving Ricks to teach at the University of Utah. He served as instructor from 1933 to 1947, being absent four of those years as he pursued higher degrees. While he was away working on his doctorate, the college auditorium was removed to provide space for music instruction. There were no plays performed while he was away, and Catmull, upon his returning to Ricks, refused to stage productions without a theatre facility. Catmull's refusal, brought about by the administrative decision to remove the auditorium, resulted in a bleak period of history for theatre at Ricks College. For four years theatre productions were non-existent on the campus at Ricks barring one exception, a play staged by the staff of the college's newspaper. If Joseph Catmull had been satisfied without a facility and continued to struggle along as best he could it is doubtful that the giant wheels of administration would have ever recognized the needs of the department. Catmull's action could not be ignored, but definitely drew attention to the situation.

William Kauffman is one of the most outstanding theatre faculty members included in this history. He is responsible for the rebirth of theatre at Ricks College after four years of inactivity. During the four years he was at Ricks before his death, Kauffman initiated the production of fifteen three-act plays, eleven one-act plays, and three
original three-act plays for public performance. He produced the first arena productions staged on campus and organized the Upper Snake River Valley Players, the first community-Ricks College theatre organization. This organization broadened the experience of students by allowing them to work with a variety of directors and adult actors from the area. Kauffman was a dedicated, organized artist who was able to initiate from nothing a vital functioning program that would be built up during the next thirty years.

Mary Merkley directed *As You Like It* in 1915, and Myrtle Henderson directed *Twelfth Night* in 1933, but it wasn't until Aaron Roylance's chairmanship that classic works of any kind found a regular acceptance in the theatre seasons at Ricks College. He produced four Shakespearean productions in several years, which served as a springboard for those that would follow to include classic works. A second faculty member was added under Roylance's leadership which provided a new perspective of theatre for students at Ricks.

Lyle Watson was a dedicated theatre man, serving almost as a one man department for five years, as Kay Wilkins was heavily involved with radio and broadcasting. In 1962 Watson brought Lee Gifford to Ricks College, the department's first technical theatre person. Two years later the faculty had grown to four members who directly related to theatre production. An additional two faculty positions would be created in 1969 and 1971.

While Watson served as chairman he employed a philosophy which would mold the department significantly from 1965 through his retirement in 1979. That philosophy was based on the employment of professionals to star in the college's musicals. Watson felt it a tremendous learning
experience for the students to work with people like Dorothy Lamour, Harry Goz, Howard Keel, and Robert Peterson. The philosophy became a great drawing card for the productions and created many new theatre patrons in the Upper Snake River Valley. People would come to see the stars and discover that good theatre was to be had at Ricks College. Many of these musical productions toured to other cities in Idaho, as well as Salt Lake City. These tours brought a great deal of recognition to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Ricks College, and Ricks College theatre. Watson toured with non-musical plays as well, throughout Idaho, Washington and Oregon.

When Lee Gifford left Ricks College, he cited the contention between the drama and music departments as the major factor in his decision. Disagreements and contentions played an important part in the department's history. Lynn Benson arrived in the summer of 1964 and immediately entered into the Playmill project in West Yellowstone, Montana. Before the summer season began, there was a falling out in the partnership that resulted in Lyle Watson's leaving. Even before Watson and Benson had worked together as educators, their relationship had become polarized. In the fifteen years these men worked together and shared directing responsibilities, Lyle Watson directed every musical comedy. It seems apparent that Watson used his clout as chairman to award himself the honor of directing the stars. Lynn Benson was afforded the opportunity to direct the operas, but the personal recognition seemed never to equal that of the directing of the musical comedies.
Such a polarization between individuals within the same department can't continue for any length of time before it affects others around them. Roger Harris came to Ricks in 1969 as a temporary replacement for Robert Nelson, who was on a sabbatical leave. Harris was told he would serve in technical theatre for one year and then be worked into the directing program. That transition never occurred and Harris is still serving as a designer at Ricks. It may be presumptuous to assume Harris' situation is a direct result of the polarization, but it is obvious the department was not attempting to share directing responsibilities among those who were qualified.

The quality of scenic designs and sets has made a marked improvement since Harris and Nelson have been working together in the technical theatre area. One need only look at photographs of earlier productions to quickly recognize the advancements made technically since 1970.

Robert Nelson served as chairman from 1972 to 1981, but Watson's star philosophy continued until his retirement in 1979. It is puzzling that Watson continued to direct the musical comedies even after Nelson became chairman. Perhaps it was an accepted element in the department that Watson was the musical director, or perhaps Nelson was avoiding a direct confrontation that might occur if directing assignments were altered. Whatever the reason, the patrons of Ricks College theatre were deprived of the opportunity of seeing musical productions staged from a differing point of view during Watson's years.
As chairman, Robert Nelson brought these conflicting elements together to work for a common goal, that of a new facility. He was overseer of efforts to design a facility that would serve the college for many years to come.

Lynn Benson was made department chairman in 1981, and though he was involved in the past era of polarization, it appears a genuine effort has been made on his behalf to overcome internal conflicts. Of the thirty-four goals for the department listed in chapter X, eight of them deal with departmental unity by developing a greater awareness of one another and the talents and abilities each faculty member possesses. A major contribution towards the uniting of Ricks College and Brigham Young University theatre departments was Benson's negotiating BYU-Ricks credit for students involved with the Playmill Theatre in West Yellowstone, Montana. The Playmill auditions students from both schools as well as employing a guest director from Brigham Young University who directs one show each summer and teaches theatre related classes.

It should be noted that of the six people currently involved with theatre at Ricks College, three of them—Lynn Benson, Roger Harris, and Ray Versluys—had had previous experience as students at Ricks before coming as faculty and staff. All current faculty and staff had an acquaintance with someone in the department before coming to Ricks, except Rodger Sorensen. This condition raises the obvious question of inbreeding in the department. Lyle Watson and Lynn Benson were both former students at Ricks, but neither of them were acquainted with the existing theatre faculty when hired by the school. Robert Nelson was associated with Lyle Watson through summer school activities at Brigham Young University, and was recommended by Lyle Watson to replace Lee
Gifford. Roger Harris was a student of Watson's, and was later added to the faculty while Watson was serving as chairman of the department. Susan Williams Whitfield was an associate of Roger Harris' and came to Ricks on Harris' recommendation through Watson. The data shows only one instance where a student taught by a professor has returned to work as faculty in the department while the original professor was still teaching. The previous association by the faculty members at Ricks with the college and Ricks instructors has not detracted from the quality of theatre at Ricks College. The evidence speaks well of Ricks College theatre, when people would have a desire to return, and that friends would encourage others to come to this institution to pursue their careers.

**Play Genres**

Most of the plays performed during the first forty years of this history are now difficult to locate, not being listed in the major play publishing catalogues. From their titles and descriptions in newspaper articles it is evident that the majority of them were light farces. Although there are some titles that are more familiar in the Catmull years, most non-theatre people would only recognize two Shakespearean works, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, and a half dozen Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. Comedies and farces have always received a greater acceptance at Ricks College than have tragedies and serious drama. This is largely due to Rexburg's being a rural community with an economy based on agriculture. Theatre patrons there generally view theatre as a light entertainment escape vehicle and do not come to the theatre to be educated or preached at.
There have been at least fifteen productions of Shakespearean works in the last thirty years, giving an average of one every other season. Most of these productions have been comedies excepting MacBeth in 1957, Othello in 1962, Hamlet in 1964, and Julius Caesar in 1968.

The realism of Ibsen was demonstrated in A Doll's House in 1967 and in An Enemy of the People in 1970.

Expressionism found a voice with Karel Capek's Rossum's Universal Robots that played in 1954 and in 1974.

Modern poets were represented with Maxwell Anderson's Winterset and Christopher Fry's A Phoenix Too Frequent.

Everyman, a medieval morality play, was performed in 1977 and Sophocles' Antigone the same year during a different season.

Moliere has been represented with The Miser in 1978 and The Imaginary Invalid in 1980.

Existentialism even gets a vote with Archibald MacLeish's J.B. that played in 1960 and in 1980.

Theatre of the Absurd has yet to find a place on the theatre season at Ricks. It is very doubtful that the comedy-farce loving patrons of Rexburg could accept an abstract theatre presentation.

Ricks College theatre has been friendly to native American playwrights, especially comedy writers. The number one choice on campus is Moss Hart and George Kaufman. Several of their plays have been performed on campus including George Washington Slept Here, The Man Who Came To Dinner and three different productions of You Can't Take It With You. Comedy-farce writers Mary Chase and Neil Simon have had many of their plays produced as well.
When Ricks has performed serious drama it has supported America's realistic writers including Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller. The Glass Menagerie was produced in 1957, in 1965 and in 1975. Miller's The Crucible was staged in 1960 and in 1971, All My Sons in 1960 and in 1979, and Death of a Salesman in 1969.

Ricks College's theatre season is chosen with careful discretion. The aim is to provide plays that are not offensive to community patrons, yet exhibit and promote ideals and beliefs of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Many plays are of necessity omitted from the season because of obscene language or blatant sexual scenes.

Ricks College's most often produced mystery writer is Agatha Christie. Her plays Witness For The Prosecution, Mousetrap, and Ten Little Indians were produced in 1957, in 1962, and in 1977 respectively.


Lyle Watson directed three shows at Ricks that he had previously performed in while a student there. He twice directed Miracle Worker, The Glass Menagerie, Romeo and Juliet, and The King and I. Lynn Benson twice directed Seventh Heaven, Arsenic and Old Lace, Roshoman, Lamp at Midnight, and You Can't Take It With You. While some may be inclined to suggest that there were too many repetitions of the same plays by the same directors, a closer look shows that an average of over ten years has passed between duplications. Another important contributing factor to repeating of plays is the lack of time directors have to adequately prepare their productions. These directors have been asked to direct three and four shows apiece each season, many of them following one right after another, and still teach up to fifteen hours a week. With such a demanding schedule it is of little wonder that directors turn to plays they are familiar with in an effort to stage successful productions in the allotted time.

To The Future

Ricks College theatre has a rich heritage, one it can be proud to share with fellow colleagues and institutions. To build upon that heritage an effort should be made by the department to eliminate
personality polarization. There is a need to develop a strong esprit de corps, where all associated with the department share in its growth, planning, and heritage.

The departmental goals contained in Chapter X list the goal of planning theatre seasons two years in advance. While two years is a good start, a theoretical planning of twenty years is feasible. This planning would not determine what play is to be presented but the literary style and dramatic form the play should possess. This planning would allow the department to have long-range goals of audience education and appreciation of various forms and styles, while bringing a well-rounded balance to the theatre production season.

The musical theatre and opera offerings stand as a hallmark in Ricks' theatre history. These productions are not only crowd pleasers but give opportunity to literally hundreds of students to perform. The college should offer a course in musical theatre that would include dance, singing, acting, and movement. Such a course would bring even more finesse to Ricks' productions, as well as help prepare students for professional employment.

The data reveal very little correlation between the departments of theatre at Ricks College and her sister school Brigham Young University. Many transferring students feel unprepared for the advanced classes at Brigham Young University, and often students from Ricks are regarded as being little more than well prepared freshmen instead of juniors. Perhaps a faculty exchange could be arranged one semester each year when a Brigham Young professor would teach and direct at Ricks College, sharing his ideas and philosophy with the faculty and students. Meanwhile, the Ricks faculty member could do the reverse by coming to
Brigham Young University. Such a program, or something similar, would bring about a comradeship between faculties of the two institutions and a greater appreciation for each school's work.

In reviewing the data it becomes evident there is a need for additional faculty members. Another director added to the faculty would lessen the heavy production load on those involved. The addition of another highly trained technical person would provide the know-how to use the new facilities to their fullest capabilities. These added faculty members would provide the opportunity to expand curriculum offerings and allow the necessary time needed by faculty members for proper production planning.

The improvement made in the technical area with the part-time employment of Ray Versluys points out the need of that position to be made permanent. A full-time shop foreman would provide the expertise needed for scene shop employee supervision and protection for the facility and equipment. A full-time shop foreman would free other faculty members in technical theatre to apply more serious time to designing scenery that utilizes the facilities' capabilities.

Curriculum data show that more preparation should be given students in theatre history and theory with courses offered for the study of dramatic literature from various periods. Such classes build a strong academic base for students transferring to other four year institutions.

Many institutions, Ricks College among them, have buildings and facilities named after men and women who have contributed a great deal to the school in a particular academic area. The naming of facilities lends a degree of permanence and birthright to a department, revealing
its past heritage. The Department of Theatre Arts at Ricks College should take necessary steps to name its theatres and classrooms after the individuals contained in this history. All faculty members, current and former, living or deceased, should be considered for this honor upon merit and selfless contribution to the Department of Theatre Arts.

In briefly examining theatre at the junior colleges of Utah and Idaho one sees the potential Ricks College theatre possesses of becoming a leader in the mountain west. Ricks College houses the finest facility of any, a larger student body to draw talent from, a capable faculty, and the opportunity to expand faculty and curriculum to meet the needs of theatre students.

There is a need for administrative support to the Department of Theatre Arts at Ricks College. One cannot read this history without being aware of theatre's neglect by administrators throughout its history. Twice facilities were taken away from the department with no replacement provided for several years. The new fine arts center, which held a high priority spot on the college's building plan list over twenty years ago, was allowed to slip on the priority list time after time as other buildings were built. Men and women in the theatre department were left to struggle on their own without help and guidance from administrators. Many recommendations from qualified theatre faculty members have been overlooked and ignored by administrators in regard to administrative decisions that affect the Department of Theatre Arts. Administrative support is mandatory if the Department of Theatre Arts is to become the leader it should be in the mountain west.
If all concerned with the Department of Theatre Arts at Ricks College can press forward in a desire to provide the best possible program for students, assuring them of a positive, successful experience, Ricks College can become a model for successful junior college theatre programs.
The following pages contain a schedule of plays performed at Ricks College from 1905 to 1981. The director's name appears in the left column, while the play and author's name appear in the right column.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Writer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1904 - 05</td>
<td>Phyllis, the Farmer's Daughter</td>
<td>Oscar Kirkham</td>
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<td>1905 - 06</td>
<td>Kentucky</td>
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<td>Southern Rose</td>
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<td>1906 - 07</td>
<td>Heroes of '76</td>
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<td>1907 - 08</td>
<td>Herod the Great</td>
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<td>My Wife's First Husband</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Merry Milk Maids</td>
<td>Chas. J. Engar</td>
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<td>1908 - 09</td>
<td>The Little Savage</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Charity Ball, by Elizabeth Birdsall</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A Box of Monkeys</td>
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<td>Our Boys</td>
<td>D. W. Cummings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sylvia, by Rhys-Herbert</td>
<td>Chas. J. Engar</td>
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1909 - 10

Philopena

In The Little Big Horn

Chas. J. Engar

Nautical Knot, by Maud Elizabeth Inch and William Rhys-Herbert

Because I Love You, by Virginia and Frank Vernon

1910 - 11

Lenora Shaw

Belshazzar's Doom

In the Bishop's Carriage

Lawyer and the Client

The Tramp

A Box of Monkeys

W. King Driggs

The Navajo Princess

1911 - 12

Irene Bassett

Twixt Love and Money

A Man of the World

1912 - 13

Vera Rich

Sinbad, the Sailor

1913 - 14

Lucile Cannon

The Mikado, by Gilbert and Sullivan

Lucile Canon

Sweet Lavender, by Pinero

Lucile Canon

Silas Marner, by T. S. Elliott

1914 - 15

Hyrum Manwaring

Saul
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<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>1915 - 16</td>
<td>Mary Merkley</td>
<td>As You Like It, by William Shakespeare</td>
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<td>Mary Merkley</td>
<td>College Days</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mary Merkley</td>
<td>Commencement Days</td>
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<td>1916 - 17</td>
<td>Paxman</td>
<td>Cousin Kate</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>The Bo'sn's Bride</td>
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<td>1917 - 18</td>
<td>Sarah Gillespie</td>
<td>Milestones</td>
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<td>At the End of the Rainbow</td>
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<td>1918 - 19</td>
<td>Sarah Gillespie</td>
<td>The Pennant</td>
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<td>The Touchdown</td>
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<td>1919 - 20</td>
<td>Sarah Gillespie</td>
<td>Dolly Reforming Herself</td>
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<td>Yokohama Maid</td>
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<td>Sarah Gillespie</td>
<td>All of a Sudden Peggy</td>
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<td>1920 - 21</td>
<td>Southwick</td>
<td>The Hermit of Hawaii</td>
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<td>1921 - 22</td>
<td>Ralph Jensen</td>
<td>The Gypsy Rover</td>
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<td>Clarence, by Booth Tarkington</td>
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1922 - 23

Gladys M. Smith

The Charm School, by Alice Duer Miller and Robert Milton

Stop Thief, by Carlyle Moore

The Private Secretary, by HWTREY

The Mikado, by Gilbert and Sullivan

1923 - 24

Harry Nelson

Little Women

Martha

Seventeen, by Booth Tarkington

Suppressed Desire, by Susan Glaspell

The Valiant, by Holworthy Hall and Robert Middlemass

1924 - 25

Blanche McKey

The Fortune Hunter, by Winchell Smith

When the Cat's Away

Everybody's Husband

Just Suppose

Chimes of Normandy

1925 - 26

Blanche McKey

That Blond Person, by Helen F. Bagg

Dear Me, by Luther Long and Hale Hamilton

How A Woman Keeps A Secret, by Frank Dumont

Old Lady

Faust, by Gounod
1926 - 27

Blanche McKey
The Lost Paradise, by Ludwig Fulda and Henery DeMille
Blanche McKey
A Strenuous Life, by Richard Walton Tully
Blanche McKey
The Bohemian Girl, by Balfe

1927 - 28

Myrtle Henderson
The Patsy, by Barry Conners
Myrtle Henderson
In the Next Room, by Harriet Ford
Myrtle Henderson
The Pirates of Penzance, by Gilbert and Sullivan
Myrtle Henderson
The Bust, by Charles F. Harrison

1928 - 29

Myrtle Henderson
Laughter of Fools
Myrtle Henderson
The Pirates of Penzance, by Gilbert and Sullivan
Myrtle Henderson
H.M.S. Pinafore, by Gilbert and Sullivan
Myrtle Henderson
Lady of Lyons
Myrtle Henderson
The Irresistible Marmaduke

1929 - 30

Myrtle Henderson
The Celebrity, by Jerome K. Jerome
Myrtle Henderson
Baby Mine, by Margaret Mayo
Myrtle Henderson
The Mikado, by Gilbert and Sullivan
Myrtle Henderson
Once There Was A Princess, by Juliet Wolbor Tompkins
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Performer</th>
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<tr>
<td>1930 - 31</td>
<td>Myrtle Henderson</td>
<td>The Intimate Strangers, by Booth Tarkington</td>
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<td>Myrtle Henderson</td>
<td>The Crisis</td>
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<td>Myrtle Henderson</td>
<td>Red Mill, by Victor Herbert</td>
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<td>1931 - 32</td>
<td>Myrtle Henderson</td>
<td>Peg O' My Heart, by J. Hartley Manners</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Myrtle Henderson</td>
<td>Twelfth Night, by William Shakespeare</td>
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<td>1932 - 33</td>
<td>Joseph Catmull</td>
<td>The 'It' Girl, by E. L. Paul</td>
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<td>John Anderson</td>
<td>The Count and The Co-Ed</td>
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<td>The Women He Married</td>
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<td>1933 - 34</td>
<td>Joseph Catmull</td>
<td>What Happened to Jones, by George H. Broadhurst</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Joseph Catmull</td>
<td>Sun Up, by Lula Vollmer</td>
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<td>Joseph Catmull</td>
<td>The Two Vagabonds</td>
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<td>Joseph Catmull</td>
<td>Seventh Heaven, by Austin Strong</td>
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<td>Joseph Catmull</td>
<td>The Monkey's Paw, by W. W. Jacobs and Louis N. Parker</td>
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<tr>
<td>1934 - 35</td>
<td>Joseph Catmull</td>
<td>Big Hearted Herbert, by Sophie Kerr and Anna Steese Richardson</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Joseph Catmull</td>
<td>The Mikado, by Gilbert and Sullivan</td>
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Joseph Catmull  Journey's End, by R. C. Sheriff
Joseph Catmull  Second Childhood

1936 - 37
Joseph Catmull  The Return of Peter Grimm
Joseph Catmull  The Torchbearers, by George Kelly
Joseph Catmull  Death Takes A Holiday, by Alberto Cassella
Joseph Catmull  The Pirates of Penzance, by Eugene O'Neill

1937 - 38
Harry Plummer  Grandma Pulls the String
Harry Plummer  The Nine Lives of Emily, by John Kirkpatrick
Harry Plummer  Nothing But the Truth, by James Montgomery
Harry Plummer  Omigosh, by Edwin Stanley
Harry Plummer  A Bill of Divorcement

1938 - 39
Harry Plummer  Another Language, by Rose Franken
John Anderson  The Gondoliers, by Gilbert and Sullivan
John Anderson  The Double Door, by Elizabeth McFadden
John Anderson  No, No, a Thousand Times No!

1939 - 40
Joseph Catmull  The Nut Farm, by John C. Brownell
Joseph Catmull  You Can't Take It With You, by Moss Hart and George Kaufman
1940 - 41

Joseph Catmull
Petticoat Fever, by Mark Reed

Joseph Catmull
H.M.S. Pinafore, by Gilbert and Sullivan

Joseph Catmull
The Cat and the Canary, by John Willard

1941 - 42

Joseph Catmull
What a Life, by Clifford Goldsmith
Wow! Some Baby!

1942 - 43

Joseph Catmull
Arsenic and Old Lace, by Joseph Kesselring

Joseph Catmull
Village Green, by Carl Allensworth

John Anderson
Patience, by Gilbert and Sullivan

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Joseph Catmull
Letters to Lucerne, by Fritz Rotter and Allen Vincent

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1947 - 48
Come Seven, by Octavus Roy Cohen

1948 - 49

William Kauffman
Five Minutes From the Station

William Kauffman
It Happens Every Day
William Kauffman

Nobody Sleeps, by Guernswy LePelley
The Blue Tie
Study Number One
Papa is All, by Patterson George
The Hill Between
The Late Christopher Bean, by Sidney Howard

1949 - 50
William Kauffman
The Sap, by William A. Grew
The Young and Fair, by N. Richard Nash
The Swan, by Melville P. Baker
McVincent, by Mari Beck
Bill O'Donnell
The Survivors, by Peter Viertel
Irwin Shaw
Wail in the Wind, by Elizabeth Bergvall Hellier
Forward the Heart, by Bernard Reines

1950 - 51

Sun Up
Study Number One
Gander Sauce
Sound of Fury
I Remember Mama, by Van Druten
Years Ago, by Ruth Gordon
Cradle of Glory, by Marie McNett
Open Door, by Bill O'Donnell
1951 - 52

William Kauffman
To Blush Unseen, by Guernsey LePelly
When Shakespeare's Ladies Meet, by Charles George
It's Life

William Kauffman
The Sale, by Martin Field
The Queen's Husband

Nathan Smith
The Settlement, by John S. Fullmer

Monson
The Importance of Being Earnest, by Oscar Wilde

1952 - 53

Aaron Roylance
Ladies of the Jury, by Fred Ballard
The Robe, by Lloyd C. Douglas
You and I, by Phillip Barry
Outward Bound, by Sutton Vane
Thirst
Two Can Play

Aaron Roylance
The Boor, by Anton Chekhov

Anna Grover
The Slave With Two Faces, by Mary Caroline Davies

Aaron Roylance
Mr. Pim Passes By, by A. A. Milne

Cloda Bird
Father of the Bride, by Caroline Francke

1953 - 54

Roland Weiser
Night of January 16th, by Ayn Rand

Aaron Roylance
Comedy of Errors, by William Shakespeare
The Curious Savage, by John Patrici

Aaron Roylance
Rossum's Universal Robots, by Karel Capek
Aaron Roylance  
Father Knows Best  

1954 - 55  

Aaron Roylance  
Miles Hendon, by Albert O. Mitchell  
Aaron Roylance  
The Man, by Mel Dinelli  
George Benton  
A Better Man Trap  
Jay McDonald  
Elizabeth's Young Man, by L. S. Hasbrouck  
Shirlene Wurst  
Fireman, Save My Child, by Ned Albert  
In Time of Harvest  
Aaron Roylance  
Mrs. McThing, by Mary Chase  

1955 - 56  

Aaron Roylance  
Much Ado About Nothing, by William Shakespeare  
Rue C. Johnson  
John Loves Mary, by Normand Krasna  
Howard Salisbury  
Pygmalion and Galatea  
Rue C. Johnson  
Family Portrait, by Lenore Coffee and William Joyce Cowen  
Aaron Roylance  
Sabrina Fair, by Samuel Taylor  

1956 - 57  

Aaron Roylance  
A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, by Richard Rodgers and Moss Hart  
Howard Salisbury  
Kind Lady, by Edward Chodorov  
Rue C. Johnson  
George Washington Slept Here, by Moss Hart and George Kaufman  
Aaron Roylance  
The Wizard of Oz, by Elizabeth F. Goodspeed  
Aaron Roylance  
MacBeth, by William Shakespeare  
Rue C. Johnson  
The Glass Menagerie, by Tennessee Williams
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>Plays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1957 - 58</td>
<td>Aaron Roylance</td>
<td><em>A Midsummer Night's Dream</em>, by William Shakespeare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lyle Watson</td>
<td><em>Witness for the Prosecution</em>, by Agatha Christie</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victor Chandler</td>
<td><em>My Three Angels</em>, by Sam and Bella Spewack</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aaron Roylance</td>
<td><em>Harvey</em>, by Mary Chase</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lyle Watson</td>
<td><em>Huck Finn</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aaron Roylance</td>
<td><em>Inherit the Wind</em>, by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee</td>
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<tr>
<td>1958 - 59</td>
<td>Lyle Watson</td>
<td><em>The Diary of Anne Frank</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ed Eaton</td>
<td><em>The White Sheep of the Family</em>, by du guarde Peach and Ian Hay</td>
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<td>Lyle Watson</td>
<td><em>Anastasia</em>, by Guy Bolton</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kay Wilkins</td>
<td><em>Twelve Angry Men</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lyle Watson</td>
<td><em>In Time of Harvest</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lyle Watson</td>
<td><em>Desperate Hours</em>, by Joseph Hayes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1959 - 60</td>
<td>Lyle Watson</td>
<td><em>Time Remembered</em>, by Jean Anouilh</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lyle Watson</td>
<td><em>Our Town</em>, by Thornton Wilder</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lyle Watson</td>
<td><em>All My Sons</em>, by Arthur Miller</td>
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<tr>
<td>1960 - 61</td>
<td>Lyle Watson</td>
<td><em>The Crucible</em>, by Arthur Miller</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kay Wilkins</td>
<td><em>Heaven Can Wait</em>, by Harry Segall</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lyle Watson</td>
<td><em>J.B.</em>, by Archibald MacLeish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Howard Salisbury

The Winter's Tale, by William Shakespeare

Lyle Watson

Auntie Mame, by Lawrence Lee

Lyle Watson

Man Who Came to Dinner, by Moss Hart and George Kaufman

Lyle Watson

Bartered Bride, by Smetana

1961 - 62

Lyle Watson

A Majority of One, by Leonard Spigelgass

Lyle Watson

Othello, by William Shakespeare

Lyle Watson

La Traviata, by Giuseppe Verdi

Lyle Watson

The Male Animal, by James Thurber

Lyle Watson

The Andersonville Trail, by Sam Levitt

1962 - 63

Lyle Watson

Mousetrap, by Agatha Christie

Lyle Watson

Miracle Worker, by William Gibson

Lyle Watson

A Phoenix Too Frequent, by Christopher Fry

Lyle Watson

The Matchmaker, by Thornton Wilder

Sara Lee Heilesen

Carmen, by Bizet

John Brown's Body, by Steven Vincent

1963 - 64

Lyle Watson

Family Portrait, by Lenore Coffee and William Joyce Cowen

Lyle Watson

Brigadoon, by Lerner and Loewe

Sara Lee Heilesen

Bad Seed, by Maxwell Anderson

Lyle Watson

Charley's Aunt, by Brandon Thomas

Lyle Watson

Hamlet, by William Shakespeare
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Play</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>Life With Father, by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crousce</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faust, by Goethe, music by Charles Gounod</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Glass Menagerie, by Tennessee Williams</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Taming of the Shrew, by William</td>
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<td>My Fair Lady, by Lerner and Loewe</td>
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<td>1965-66</td>
<td>The Sound of Music, by Rodgers and Hammerstein</td>
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<td>Rashomon, by Fay and Michael Kanin</td>
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<td>La Boheme, by Puccini</td>
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<td>The Importance of Being Earnest, by Oscar Wilde</td>
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<td>Arsenic and Old Lace, by Joseph Kesselring</td>
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<td>Papa Is All</td>
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<td>1966-67</td>
<td>The Red Plush Parlor, by Christie Lund Coles</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A Doll's House, by Henrik Ibsen</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Die Fledermaus, by Johann Strauss</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Camelot, by Lerner and Loewe</td>
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<td>Pegora</td>
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<td>1967-68</td>
<td>Barefoot in the Park, by Neil Simon</td>
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<td>Hansel and Gretel, by Humperdinck</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Performer(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1968-69</td>
<td>Lyle Watson</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lynn Benson</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kathleen Nelson</td>
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<td>Lyle Watson</td>
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<td>Lynn Benson</td>
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<td>Lynn Benson</td>
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<td>Lyle Watson</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lynn Benson</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Paul Mortensen</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lynn Benson</td>
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<td>Lyle Watson</td>
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<td>Lyle Watson</td>
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<td>Lynn Benson</td>
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<td>Kathy Spencer</td>
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<td>Lyle Watson</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lynn Benson</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lyle Watson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1970 - 71

Lyle Watson  
Lyle Watson  
Lynn Benson  
Lynn Benson  
Lyle Watson  
Lynn Benson

Enemy of the People, by Henrik Ibsen
Man of La Mancha, by Dale Wasserman
Our Town, by Thornton Wilder
She Stoops to Conquer, by Oliver Goldsmith
I Remember Mama, by John Van Druten
The Bartered Bride

1971 - 72

Lyle Watson  
Lyle Watson  
Lynn Benson  
Kathleen Nelson  
Lyle Watson  
Lynn Benson  
Lynn Benson

The Fantasticks, by Tom Jones and Harvey L. Schmits
Fiddler on the Roof, by Sheldon Harnick, music by Jerry Bock
The Crucible, by Arthur Miller
Winnie the Pooh, by A. A. Milne
Midsummer Night's Dream, by William Shakespeare
The Mikado, by Gilbert and Sullivan
See How They Run, by Phillip King

1972 - 73

Lyle Watson  
Lyle Watson  
Lynn Benson  
Lynn Benson  
Lyle Watson  
Lynn Benson

You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown, by Clark Gesner
1776, by Peter Stone and Sherman Edwards
Lamp at Midnight, by Barrie Stavis
Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens
Butterflies are Free, by Leonard Gershe
Cavalleria Rusticana
Lynn Benson  
Lynn Benson  

**Down in the Valley**

And They Shall Be Gathered, by Martin Kelley

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**1973 - 74**

Lyle Watson  

The Barretts of Wimpole Street, by Rudolph Besier

Lyle Watson  

No, No, Nanette, by Otto Harbach and Irving Caesar, music by Vincent Youmans

Lyle Watson  

Mrs. McThing, by Mary Chase

Lyle Watson  

A Man For All Seasons, by Robert Bolt

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**1974 - 75**

Lyle Watson  

Saturday's Warrior, by Doug Stewart and Lex de Azevedo

Lyle Watson  

The Prisoner of Second Avenue, by Neil Simon

Lynn Benson  

Rossum's Universal Robots, by Karel Capek

Lynn Benson  

The Lark, by Lillian Hellman

Lynn Benson  

The Merry Widow

Lyle Watson  

The Glass Menagerie, by Tennessee Williams

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**1975 - 76**

Thomas Empey  

The Title of Liberty

Lynn Benson  

Ladies in Retirement, by Edward Percy and Reginald Denham

Lynn Benson  

As You Like It, by William Shakespeare

Lyle Watson  

Abe Lincoln in Illinois, by Robert E. Sherwood
Lyle Watson

Threads of Glory, by Doug Stewart and Lex de Azevedo

You Can't Take It With You, by Moss Hart and George Kauffman

1976 - 77

Lyle Watson

The Miracle Worker, by William Gibson

Twelfth Night, by William Shakespeare

Ten Little Indians, by Agatha Christie

Antigone, by Sophocles

Shenandoah, by James Lee Barrett, music by Gary Geld, lyrics by Peter Udell

Harvey, by Mary Chase

1977 - 78

Lyle Watson

The Rainmaker, by Richard Nash

Everyman

Little Mary Sunshine, by Rick Bisoyan

The Miser, by Moliere

Carmen

1978 - 79

Lyle Watson

Cheaper by the Dozen, by Frank Gilbreth

Seventh Heaven, by Austin Strong

Romeo and Juliet, by William Shakespeare

Roshomon, by Fay and Michael Kanin

Man of La Mancha, by Dale Wasserman

Curious Savage, by John Patrick
1979 - 80

Roger Harris

Rodger Sorensen

Lynn Benson

Rodger Sorensen

Lynn Benson

Rodger Sorensen

Lynn Benson

All My Sons, by Arthur Miller

Heaven Can Wait, by Harry Segall

Arsenic and Old Lace, by Joseph Kesselring

Comedy of Errors, by William Shakespeare

Yeoman of the Guard, by Gilbert and Sullivan

The Green Pastures, by Marc Connely

1980 - 81

Lynn Benson

Rodger Sorensen

Rodger Sorensen

Lynn Benson

Rodger Sorensen

Lynn Benson

Robert Nelson

Lamp at Midnight, by Barrie Stavis

The Matchmaker, by Thornton Wilder

J.B., by Archibald MacLeish

The Music Man, by Meredith Wilson

The Merchant of Venice, by William Shakespeare

Deadwood Dick or The Game of Gold

A Funny Thing Happened On The Way to the Forum, by Burt Shevelove and Larry Gelbart, music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

Li'l Abner, by Norman Panama and Melvin Frank, music by Johnny Mercer, lyrics by Gene de Paul

Chapter Two, by Neil Simon

1981 - 82

Lynn Benson

Rodger Sorensen

Rodger Sorensen

You Can't Take It With You, by Moss Hart and George Kaufman

Lion in Winter, by James Goldman

Ah, Wilderness! by Eugene O'Neill
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Clarke, John L. Former President of Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho, 5 January 1982.


Harris, Roger. Ricks College Professor, Rexburg, Idaho, 4 January 1982.

Nelson, Robert W. Ricks College Professor and Former Department Chairman of Dramatic Arts, Rexburg, Idaho, 30 December 1981.


Watson, Lyle. Retired Ricks College Professor and Former Department Chairman of Speech and Drama, Mesa, Arizona, 30 January 1982.

Whitfield, Susan W. Ricks College Professor, Rexburg, Idaho, 6 January 1982.

Wilkins, C. Kay. Ricks College Professor and Former Department Chairman of Speech, Drama, and Radio, Rexburg, Idaho, 4 January 1982.

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HISTORY OF THEATRE AND THEATRE CURRICULUM

AT RICKS COLLEGE, REXBURG, IDAHO,

THROUGH 1981

John Thomas Bidwell
Department of Theatre and Cinematic Arts
M.A. Degree, August 1982

ABSTRACT

This history of theatre at Ricks College provides the only comprehensive written work available on the subject. Whenever available, the thesis provides the reader with concise information concerning plays performed, their authors, the directors, performance dates, and performance locations. Changes and growth in course curriculum offerings, physical facilities, and faculty have been recorded as well. The work reveals that Ricks College theatre has been a vital contribution to theatre in the Upper Snake River valley of Southeastern Idaho.

This comprehensive history will serve as a resource for future departmental planning in the Department of Theatre at Ricks College, and for future study, by the Church Educational System of The Church of Christ of Latter-day Saints, of the relationship between schools within that system.

COMMITTEE APPROVAL:

Max C. Golightly, Committee Chairman
Charles L. Metten, Committee Member
Charles A. Henson, Committee Member
Robert A. Nelson, Graduate Coordinator