

# REBEL 5IVE



## Episode #37 - Phil Anderson

Gary (00:02):

You're listening to Rebel 5ive , an interactive interview podcast with alumni, past and current parents and friends of Roncalli high school. I'm your host, Gary Armbruster, director of alumni and corporate relations at Roncalli . And each week I will ask our guests five questions regarding how their lives have evolved and how key connections of experience, opportunity and alumni networking have propelled them to where they are today. We'll talk challenges, how to overcome challenges and what they've learned along the way. Stay tuned.

Gary (00:33):

Phil Anderson is our guest today on the Rebel 5ive podcast. Phil, welcome aboard the Rebel 5ive . We've been out of the building now I think for six weeks under, um, distance learning. Tell me a little bit about how it's going for you. I, I interviewed Phil Milroy and Gerard Striby the last couple of weeks and they kind of gave me their, their thoughts on it.

Phil (00:55):

Uh, well it's been, it's been different. Uh, you know, teaching theater is a little difficult when you're, you know, doing distance distance learning. It's, uh, everything we do is hands on. It's, it's project based, it's group based, it's interaction. Uh, and so it's difficult. But we've, you know, found some creative ways to use some different resources that are out there. I've actually found a few things for my technical classes that I really like that I'll, I'll use even when we get back into the classroom. So it's really forced me to do a lot of research online to find things that will work for us. So, but, you know, all in all it's, it's coming along pretty well.

Gary (01:29):

The play that we've started doing in the spring semester, we had one night, unfortunately that whole weekend, other than the, the opening night was, was canceled kids, you know, they worked so, so hard and then they only get to do the performance one time. Uh, it had to be heartbreaking for not only you, but the kids as well.

Phil (01:50):

Yeah. I mean it was an emotional night that Thursday night when we kind of got wind that this was going to happen. Um, so I, you know, I called Chuck and said, Hey, you know, what's going on? We've got a performance tonight. Um, and he basically said, we, you know, it's coming down, this is going to be it. So, um, at that point we told the kids, say, Hey, if your parents aren't here, you know, get them here, this, this might be it. Uh, you know, there might be a chance that we can do it again, but we don't really know. And so, you know, a lot of the kids were able to get ahold of their families and get people there. And, and um, it, uh, it, it was an emotional night. It was, it was a really, really good performance, uh, the, the show where the production was, you can't take it with you.

Phil (02:33):

And, you know, the kids did a great job. It, it, uh, the, the emotions were high, but they stayed in character and, and really just, um, had a lot of fun. We have, you know, we've got a lot of seniors this year as well. And so, you know, the seniors are really going through a, an emotional time with all the stuff that they're missing out on with, with prom and graduation, you know, being moved later and later. And you know, all of their, their senior moments have been kinda missed or put on. And so that's, uh, we were glad that we were able to get one performance in there. There are a lot of schools who can't get, didn't get any, any. And I've got a friend who directs here in Plainfield and you know, their production was the next weekend. And so they unfortunately didn't get to get a performance in. So they, uh, they all got together on zoom and for families, they did it through zoom kind of. Uh, but you know, that's, it's difficult without the character and the stage and all of that. So, but it, it turned out to be a great production and I'm just very, very, very thankful that we were able to get one performance in.

Gary (03:37):

We'll come back to that, but I want to back up a little bit. You graduated from Franklin Central in 1992. Yeah. You've been at Roncalli for 23 years. At Franklin central. What was the inspiration for you to get involved in the theater?

Phil (03:50):

I was involved in theater really since my freshman year. I kind of jumped in and took a couple of classes and really loved it. I loved the technical side of things more. Um, you know, I really, I ran their soundboard most of the time and so I was their sound guy and lights. I was in show choir, so I just, I was, I was involved in that performance, uh, theater side of things through high school. And um, our, our music director, her name was Rebecca Note. Uh, you know, she was a huge inspiration for me and she just a great lady and you know, to have the last name note and teach music, why not write very appropriate. Uh, and our theater program as well. Our theater director, you know, we just, uh, it, it was a great program. It was something, you know, we, we had a clown troop that we did and we went around to different churches and to be able to in a public setting, still be able to experience my faith was, was, was neat.

Gary (04:50):

I just thought of this, but on good Friday for a number of years, I've been at Roncalli for 14 years. I think you do it about every other year. You do a mime production. Is that, does that come from that at all?

Phil (05:02):

Uh, that actually came from college when I was at Anderson university for my undergrad, I started a tramp clown troop there or actually a mime troupe more and we went and traveled and did some stuff and you know, New York and different things like that. And, and uh, we put together and created a lot of different mimes. Uh, some of them we used from other people that had created them and that came from that, from that mime troupe.

Gary (05:26):

Moving on. You have Lucas who's 14, McKayla is 11, maybe 15, 16 years ago there was a math teacher up on the third floor that probably catches your eye by the name of Michelle. There are many, many marriages coming out of the teaching profession that Roncalli and yours is one of them. So talk a little bit about that. How'd you meet Michelle?

Phil (05:49):

Uh, I mean, you know, she was a teacher at Roncalli and we got to talk in and you know, uh, just became friends. Uh, she came from Terra Haute, she went to Indiana state university and she had worked at Terre Haute South for I think a year or two before she came to Roncalli. And, uh, we, you know, we just got to talk in and I think it, I think it was our first date

I went, she was living in Plainfield and an apartment and, um, I drove my motorcycle out there and I, I must've been a little early because she was having a, uh, I think it was a Tupperware party maybe. I'm not sure what it was, but, so I'm there for first date and her entire family is there at the Tupperware party. And so I'm meeting them for the first time and they're like, you know, it was just a, it was an awkward situation

Gary (06:37):

in 2006. We build a new auditorium. You started 23 years ago, long before the new auditorium was built. Did you ever think or was it ever thrown out to you in those early years that someday we would have an auditorium suitable for our productions?

Phil (06:55):

Yeah, Joe said from the onset, when I first started back in 98 that it was in the plans, you know, he shared with me that, that master plan and said, Hey, here's what we're doing. Here's what we want to do. You know, it's a ways down the road, you know, and so, you know, it was 2006 when that was built. I started in 98 so I mean, it was a number of years that, you know, we were in that woodshed, uh, staged at the end of the gymnasium. Gymnasium that's right. Uh, you know, it's, it was exciting being down there. The, the energy and everything that happened in that room, you know, for the first half of my career at Roncalli, I don't think I ever left that gym. I mean, everything took place there. Um, and so it was just moving everything from place to place to make it work. And there was a creative element to just making things work. And that, not that I, I dislike our new theater. I love it. It's an amazing thing. But there was, there was an adventure to how we could make it work and that, that, that creative side of things, um, was fun

Gary (08:02):

Coming from Franklin central, which has all the facilities you could ever want. You went to Anderson university, which is known for their, uh, fine art program I think. And, and then being stuck in this gymnasium that had to be a shock to some extent. And I love the can-do attitude. I sometimes I go on that stage and I still think about that cause back when I was in high school, of course that's what we used and I think, Oh my gosh, compared to what we have today to that back then, not only did you, uh, you were limited on space, but you had to share that space with the boys basketball team, the girls' basketball team. Uh, back in my day we had to share it with the bingo cause we had bingo on Tuesday nights. So what was the biggest challenge that you had to overcome in that space

Phil (08:51):

Scheduling I think was the biggest thing, you know, for our play, in order to really do a play right, you, you need to rehearse it and you need to rehearse it the way that you're going to perform it. And most of our performances happened behind a curtain and onstage where we were crammed back behind things because there was athletic practices or games or, or cheerleaders or whatever was out there and the in the gymnasium. So we were, we were having to utilize this smaller space to rehearse, which I understood. I got it. And I really fought really those first couple of years to make sure that we had a dedicated a dedicated time for us to use the gymnasium. Uh, and so, you know, after, after a short time, you know, it, I explained it and it was, the opportunity then was given to us to be able to utilize that, that gym for our performance. And so we were able then that week to, to block off the gymnasium and get everything set up for us so that we could actually rehearse, uh, you know, two or three days before our actual performances.

Gary (10:03):

What was your favorite production during that time on that, that stage? Do you have one or a,

Phil (10:08):

We did a lot of great performances in there. There, there was one weird, where's Charlie was a great production, just an old classic that I've really found over over the time that there's some great theater that everybody knows and those productions are really difficult to do because everybody has an expectation when they come to it, they expect to see, you know, this specific moment that happens, like singing in the rain. They expect it to rain, which is a feat. In those productions that people aren't really familiar with. Still great productions, like where's Charlie? Um, there's some great comedy and great things that come out of it that the audience goes, wow, I've never heard of this production. And then, so there's a kind of a newness to it so that, you know, that's a lot of fun. We did Grease on stage, which yeah, the musical grease is different than a movie.

Phil (10:59):

And so not necessarily my favorite musical, but the challenges to be able to do all those different scenes on stage, on that little bitty stage and transition when we have no fly system, the curtains that go up and down, we have no way to move things in and out cause we have no wing space. So we basically took a car and we built a set around the car and then the set kind of flipped up and the car pops out and then it goes back in. And so we were able to, to get creative just to make things work.

Gary (11:31):

I oftentimes see you sitting in the back row during a production and what's it feel like just to take all that in and see the audience respond to something that you're anticipating? Cause you've seen it 16, 17, 75 times.

Phil (11:51):

It's great. Uh, there, there's many times Erin Bohn helps us with a number of our productions. Actually all of them now at this point she started out just helping with the plays and now she helps with the musicals as well. And, and you know, we've sit back there and talk and many a times just going into our preview week. So our, our production week, a lot of times we're nervous. We're, we've seen this thing a hundred times. And to us the comedy is not there. The cause we just, it's not funny anymore. We've seen it so many times. And so we, we, we constantly in our heads are fighting. Is this even a good production or are we doing a good job? What's going on? And it never fails the magic of theater. When you get an audience there, the kids do those things finally that you've been trying to get them to do that.

Phil (12:44):

It clicks and they realized it and, and it happens. Uh, and that, that magic of theater when the audience just gets it and laughs and it's, it's a lot of fun. It's just neat sitting back there and, and, and enjoying the production, uh, rather than fretting over what's going to happen next. Or one of the great things that we have pushed for since I started back in 98 is that we don't want to do a high school production. We don't want to do a production that any other high school puts on. Um, we strive to do professional theater and uh, most of the time we get it. I mean we've had a few flops but uh, you know, I feel like most of the time we get it and we, we, we expect the kids to do that as well. Um, and so, you know, it's just, it's just a lot of fun.

Gary (13:36):

I am so, so thankful that my three kids and I get, I get emotional in this just because it's such a cool program. It doesn't get the notoriety that the sports teams get. I've talked to parents who sent three kids, four kids through Roncalli and never been to a production and I think, man, you are missing it so much and I'll get back to that. But I've been to many, many parent preview nights and I'm thinking, Oh my gosh, how is this going to come off the next night? Because it, the timing's off or, or, uh, you know, the, the changes in scenery didn't go as they, it was supposed to. When you, obviously you see this, so, um, when that's over, is it best to just get into the kids and say, listen, we're on tomorrow night, or do you take a softer approach to that and, and kind of maybe an example.

Phil (14:36):

Well, yeah, we start out with parent, you know, parent preview, well, really, really our long Saturday taking notes and at that point on the long Saturday, we don't stop them during their production anymore. They just go, um, unless it's really bad then we'll stop them. But,

Phil (14:52):

you know, w we just take notes and then the, we, we don't, we don't hammer them after the production. We don't, we just let them kind of settle. A lot of times they know what they've done, what they've done wrong, and then the next day we come in when we start and we go over notes with everyone, with the entire cast, the entire crew. And we just explained to them, Hey, here's, here's what you need to do. Here's what you're missing. And you know, that stuff is starting to settle in through our Saturday performance, our Monday or Tuesday, all of those rehearsals, but it's not really sinking in. And then Wednesday when we finally get a little bit of an audience with some of the parents there, that's when they start to see what it is we're talking about because they see that interaction. They see what it is that that's

what was it that was missing or what it is that we were talking about. So that those, those moments then click for our opening night on Thursday. And so that's kind of how that process works. And it works almost every time.

Gary (15:56):

Do you have an example of a kid who that whole time up until Thursday, just struggle, struggle, struggles, and then that Thursday the lights go on and they just blossom? I'm sure you have more than one, but one that comes out to mind maybe that, uh, above the rest.

Phil (16:15):

I mean, I, I, I don't have any specific kids in mind. I mean, I've got a number of kids in mind, but I mean, it's just, it's really across the board. Even with this production, uh, you can't take it with you, those characters there, there really is no lead character in the production. It's, it's, it's an ensemble cast. And so with that, you know, everybody's feeding off of each other and until they start to play those characters fully, you know, it's difficult for the others to start kind of putting it together. And so, um, you know, it, it really just comes together.

Gary (16:49):

I've asked you this in the past and so I'm going to ask you again, and it's just you and I know no one's really listening. So when you pick a show, you can't tell me that. You don't have kids in mind for certain parts. I, you've said in the past, Oh, no, no, no, no. So what's the low down on that?

Phil (17:10):

I don't precast. And so we, we have never precasted production. We constantly go into it with an open mind. Now we're not dumb. We're not going to do a production that we don't feel like we have people to perform in it. So, so we have to look at, okay, here's, here's our group of people. Now we have freshmen that come in that we don't know, but we know our sophomores, juniors and seniors, well, freshmen, sophomores and juniors that are going to be those the next year. And so we have to look at those. We have to look at, okay, we've got this really strong core of girl dancers or boy dancers, you know, that, that we can use for a production. And so what type of production could we create or use this group of good dancers or singers or whatever it is that, that, that production really calls for.

Phil (18:00):

And so yeah, we, we prepare for that. Now going into the auditions, there are countless times where, you know, we've been surprised and we're like, wow, that, that's amazing. This person I didn't even look at or didn't even think about for this part, but they're perfect for it. And so we put them into that role. Uh, so as far as typecasting no, it doesn't happen. Uh, as far as pre-planning to make sure we have the students that could pull off the production. Yes. By all means we do that.

Gary (18:34):

How important is junior rebel theater?

Phil (18:36):

You know, it has grown to be very fruitful. We started out the program, you know, Chuck came to us when we first started the theater and said, Hey, I really want you to do this. You think you can pull it off. And so we looked at it and we were like, you know, it's a little more expensive than most of our summer camps cause we have to pay royalties, we have to pay for the books, we have to pay, you know, so, um, there's more people involved.

Phil (18:59):

Uh, and so it's, you know, it's more expensive to produce and perform then, you know, a normal summer camp, you know, softball camp, they don't have an expense other than maybe a t-shirt. Uh, and to pay their, their staff that, that helps out. Uh, for us. You know, we've got to pay a choreographer, we've got to pay a director, we've got to pay a technical person, we've got to pay a music person. We've got to pay royalties for the production, which most of these productions are done by MTI. Uh, and then also Disney. So you're paying a higher percentage because Disney owns it. And MTI. And so now it's even, it even costs more. So back to your question being fruitful. It is, it has been amazing. It's, um, we've seen a lot of kids who have come to us through our program because of the summer JRT program and it kind

of gets their foot in that door and into the world of theater at Roncalli and they're like, wow, this is pretty cool. Not only from the acting side of things, but we've had some techies that have come through that as well that have then gone on to do great things.

Gary (20:03):

I've given countless tours of the building and when I take them, whoever it is, might be one person. I might be a class of 85 on their reunion and I take them into the auditorium and I talk about that. I talk about a junior rebel theater and, um, some of our grade schools use the facility for their eighth grade, their junior high play, which I think is awesome as well. Yeah. And I, and I think that helps our program too. Yeah, that's what I was going to ask. Because, um, you know, by the time they're freshmen, some of those kids have already been on that stage five, six times. They're not intimidated by a Thursday night opening. So how important is that, not only for those kids, for that Thursday night opening, but for developing that?

Phil (20:47):

I, I think for most of them it's, it's very important. It, as long as they keep a humble spirit about it, then I think they do great things with it. We always have a handful of kids that do that though. They've been since their third grade year, they've been on that stage and now they come to us and they just, the expectation is that they're just going to be there, that they're going to get the lead part as a freshmen. Um, which happens, but it's all about that humble spirit knowing that I may not necessarily be right for this part. Um, you know, I, I, I tend to go back to Erin Madden. She was amazing on stage. Um, she, you know, back in 98, 99, 2000, um, I think 2001 is when she graduated. But so in all of those productions that she was in, she was the lead in every production except for the play of her fresh or of her senior year.

Phil (21:48):

There just wasn't a part for her, uh, that, that the type of characters that she played or could play or, or, or we felt were best for that. It just so, you know, I mean, that's very hard. You know, it's, it's devastating to somebody who has been a lead for every production now to not even get a part. So, um, it really boils down to we try to put together the best cast for that production. And so, um, you know, back to your question about, about JRT and the elementary schools coming in, you know, that that has tremendously grown our program.

Gary (22:28):

You alluded to it little, just a little bit ago and you talked about tech. And so, yeah, we have these great productions and this amazing talent in the front. But talk a little bit about the tech part of it. I'm a little biased because my three kids were involved in tech. Um, the sets that we do amazing. Just, just amazing. So talk a little bit about that because I almost, whenever I talk to a parent and I said, what's your kid involved in? Well, nothing. I said, have they ever thought about tech and theater? Now I don't mean to suggest that's the lowest common denominator by any stretch. I suggest it because I know what it has done for my kids. And so talk a little bit about that and some of the opportunities that our kids have.

Phil (23:13):

I mean, in the, in the world of technical theater there, there's a number of, of, of jobs or, or things that the student can do. You know, ultimately we have to produce safe theater, you know, and, and that's what the technical world is about, creating safe theater. And so you have to be able to do these neat, magical things. Like in our last production, we had fireworks on stage, but you have to do it safely. We've got heavy equipment that's flying above kids' heads or above. Students had our actors heads. And so you have to do it safely and so the first thing is you have to make sure you know what you're doing and that you do it properly. Our productions are 100% student run. Me as a director, the choreographers, the, you know the music you would Joe Newton and Kathy peach, that that is completely student run.

Phil (24:05):

Now Kathy sits in the pit and she directs, but as far as the, the technical side of things and all of that stuff happen behind the scenes, we're in the back of the auditorium just watching the production. That doesn't happen all the time in high school theater. Most of the time the high school theater director is running around making sure the students are doing what they're supposed to do. We tell the students from the beginning, this is your production, this is, we're going to give you the, the the pieces to make the production work and then you've got to do it. If you don't do it, it's not going to

happen. That's how they're going to learn. That's how they learn. And so from, from the lights to the sound, to the painting, to the, to the, uh, props to all that stuff. Yeah. We're there to help them through it.

Phil (24:56):

Uh, but when it comes to the performance and the running and the, the, the, those students do it. Um, I've had a number of students go on and do different things in technical theater. Uh, you know, I've got students that are working in New York, uh, with technical theater and backstage stage managing. We've got students who are, you know, working with sound companies and, and, and road shows and you know, it's just, it's, if your heart is in it, you're going to be a step ahead of everybody else because of the program that we have at Roncalli. Because it, and that's, if you put your heart to it, if you put your mind to it, if you put your settings here, because you know, I've had students come back and say, thank you for giving me this opportunity. Because when I went to college, I was, I knew more than most of the seniors did. And that's what we tried to do.

Gary (25:50):

You, you just talked about it. Student run versus director run. I will be very honest, I don't see any productions other than our productions, so I don't know what they do at South port. I don't know what they do at Perry. I'm sure. I know Perry's program's pretty good from what I understand. Talk a little bit about student run because I you, you talked about it, but I don't want you to gloss in over that cause I think that's pretty dang important

Phil (26:11):

because the students are the ones programming the light board. They're the ones focusing the lights. They're the ones during the production are, are running the light board for the cues. Uh, they're the ones moving the sets. They're the ones. Um, you know, we have, we have our stage manager. The stage manager's the one that runs the production during the show. So how unusual is that? I can't speak for all the other high schools cause I, I don't really know. I know what we did in high school and you know, we had a stage manager, but the director was still heavily involved. Um, you know, the professional world, the stage managers, it, the director and the producer, they get the show going, they run it through trials and then they hand it over and they say, here you go stage manager on the statement who runs it? Uh, you know, that's the way we try to run our program. We want the students to have a real experience. And so that stage managers backstage running cues, making sure that everything's happening. Now again, their main focus is the stage. Uh, but that stage managers are responsible for the lights, the sound, the costumes, the making sure that everything is coming together to make that production.

Gary (27:19):

We're going to go to a break, but before we go to break, I'm going to ask you this question and then we'll come back. My office is in the admin wing of school. You come through the hallway on your way to lunch almost every day. During the week of his show. You do that and you have this calmness to you and then you sit in the back row with Aaron and the other people. And I'm just amazed by that. So is that calmness, actual calmness? Are you just faking it?

Phil (27:48):

Most of the time it's calmness most of the times because I mean realistically it's amazing. If it's amazing handed it, if I've truly handed it over to the students, what more could I do? So I have to be at peace with it. I have to be at peace with, okay now, yeah, we're going to give them notes and say you might want to try this next time. But you know, I have to be at peace with it. I can't, there's nothing more I can do if I truly intend to hand it over to the students and I do. So it's either going to fail by them or it's going to succeed by them. And that's, that's the way I look at it.

Gary (28:28):

It is amazing. Again, I'm biased to the fine arts department, but the kids always rise to the occasion. I agree.

Phil (28:38):

It, uh, we, we've been, we, we've thought many times that it wasn't going to happen, that they weren't going to rise to it and magically they get it and, and become great characters on stage, great technicians backstage. And then all of a sudden we have this amazing performance that meets our expectations of not being a high school production.

Gary (29:03):

We're going to take a break with Phil Anderson on a Rebel Five podcast. We'll be back in just a second.

Break (29:10):

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Gary (29:41):

We're back on the rebel Five podcast with Phil Anderson. Phil, thanks for being here today on our remote broadcast. Uh, it's a new, new normal. I guess. Last segment we talked about being in the old gym, the gymnasium. In 2006, we built the new auditorium. Talk a little bit about what it was like when Joe Hollowell said, Hey, Phil, guess what? We're going to build a new auditorium. What was that like?

Phil (30:08):

I mean, it was anticipated. It was exciting. Um, you know, we, dr Hollowell had talked, you know, really from my first year teaching at Roncalli that this was something that was in the plans. It was in the works, didn't know when it was going to happen. Uh, and so, you know, when it did happen, we're just super excited to be able to be involved with that piece of it. And so, um, you know, we were in a number of meetings with, okay, here, what do you, what do you want, what do you need and what do you, what are your wish lists? Uh, and so those, those items were kind of laid out and we kind of planned out w then, you know, we talked about how we want the space to be, how, where we want things to be. And so there was a number of times where, you know, things moved all over the place and the planning process.

Phil (30:57):

Uh, and so, and then, you know, it kinda between a bunch of different people came together and, you know, started being built, uh, in 2005 and then came together and was finished in 2006. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to be there during the building of the production. Um, I, you know, been in the military for 20 years or had been in the military and at that time and with the Iraq war, uh, I was called to duty and so went to Iraq in 2005, which unfortunately also was the time that my son was born. You know, Michelle and I have been married about a year and, uh, you know, so we had the, that new life and uh, but I had to leave it. And so I was over there for 12 months. It, uh, came back, the auditorium wasn't finished, but, um, I was able to, you know, then kind of see the completion of it. So when I came back, there was a, you know, a big bulldozer in the middle of the auditorium with a dirt floor. Uh, the walls were all up, so the frame was there and, um, it was just neat seeing that completed project kinda come through. And then we able to move from that little stage at the end of the gymnasium to this massively huge space, which we continued to need more space.

Gary (32:17):

Well, you mentioned your military service and we all thank you for that. And I, I was going to bring that up, but I'll, I'll come back to that. But beauty and the beast, that seems to be the barometer that all other shows are held to. Uh, you mentioned it as maybe a Roncalli favorite memory. Why is that? Was it just because it was the first musical in that space, that cast? Why is that? Why is that such a special memory for you?

Phil (32:46):

You know, it was a, it was a combination of a number of different things. You know, the, the biggest thing was just this new space. I think. Um, we were able to, you know, be in this auditorium seats 558 people, uh, you know, and have a real theater experience. Um, but then also its beauty and the beast. I mean, who doesn't love that? The, the music of beauty and the beast and the, the story and that, that magical, you know, the magical element of, of these characters. We had a perfect cast. I don't think we ever, I mean we've had some really good casts, but I don't think we've ever had as perfect a cast as that cast. There was every single little part. They were perfect for those parts and we're able to get some really cool costumes from Fort Wayne civic, uh, that we rented. Uh, and they were amazing. I mean, it was, Barb Hatfield is our costumer for most of our productions and she does an amazing job. I, I, our productions would be nowhere near as amazing as they are without her expertise. And so for her to be able to put together a lot of the costumes, but then also find these magical costumes at Fort Wayne civic. I mean, it, they, it just was a great, great show all around.



Gary (34:08):

What's the biggest obstacle overcome

Phil (34:10):

storage space? So, you know, funding when we built the theater was not as much as it needed to be for the, for the storage space that we had had originally planned. And so that space was cut down pretty small. And so there's a lot of stuff that after production, you know, we unfortunately just have to destroy and throw away because we don't have a place to store it. Granted in theater there's some stuff you just have to throw away, you have to get rid of or you just can't reuse it. Uh, but there's a lot of things like furniture items, props, large unique set pieces that could be morphed into something else, uh, that, you know, we, we try to keep and because we can use them again for another production in another way. And so without that storage, without the place to store it, unfortunately we just can't do it. And so we have to discard or get rid of a lot of items that we wish we could have kept

Gary (35:09):

14 years in the new space, new quote unquote new space. It's not new anymore. It still feels new. It does. And I love giving, like I mentioned earlier, giving tours of the school and going into that facility for someone who's never been in it before and say, okay, we're Roncalli Catholic high school, we have an orchestra pit. I mean to think of that orchestra pit. That's what I think of. Who in the world would have ever thought that Roncalli would have an orchestra pit. That's just crazy talk. You talked about it before. I interviewed Erin Bohn months ago about the professional aspect of our shows. I just want you to just maybe dive into that just a little bit.

Phil (35:53):

I think it all starts with expectation. I mean it's just like an education. As a teacher, if I expect my kids to get to point C then at point C is my expectation and so point C is going to be probably a challenge for them, but I want to challenge them as a teacher and so in the world theater, I think it's the same thing. I mean we expect them to get to point C, we expect them. And point C is that professional theater. And so if we expect them to get there, the students then see us giving them the knowledge or the pieces to get there. Uh, and then it takes the students then to do it. But it all starts with expectation. So as a director we are expecting them to get there. And that's really what it boils down to. I mean, in a basic little piece that's it's expectation.

Gary (36:52):

How much pressure do the kids have on themselves to be as good as the class before them or the class before them?

Phil (36:58):

I don't think I've ever heard kids compare themselves to other classes or other productions. Um, I th I think there now there there's a lot of pressure for them I think to make the production great for them. And for everybody else that's in that cast, I don't, I don't necessarily know. And there may be that expectation that they have, I don't know, but I haven't heard that. So really I think it's the pressure that they put on themselves and there is a lot of pressure. It is more for the current production that they're in and those, those other students that are involved, they don't want to let each other down.

Gary (37:37):

How do you choose which show we're going to do?

Phil (37:40):

It's getting more and more difficult. We haven't repeated a production yet, so 23 years we haven't repeated anything really. Wow. Yup. That's, that's amazing. It's been a lot of fun. But we want to do large cast productions so that we get as many people's evolves as we can. We want to do, you know, good productions that are fun for high school students. You know, there are some productions out there that you just look at and go, I can't believe a high school student or high school actually did that performance,

Gary (38:13):

but we are Catholic school.

Phil (38:15):

Well, but even, even just high school students in general, I mean, even, even if we weren't a Catholic school, I mean, there's, there's some productions out there that you're like, eh, that's not really, I don't want to see a high school kid on stage doing something that I wouldn't want to see how they're doing. Even if they're playing a character that's older, I will say, yeah, I'm good. So, you know, back, back to the question about what, I don't remember the question was, sorry.

Gary (38:39):

How do you pick your show and who's involved? Who, I mean, it's not just,

Phil (38:43):

it's the entire production team. I mean, you know, so we, we involve the entire production team. So with the first musical, you know, Barb Hatfield, Kathy Peach, Erin Bohn, Joey Newton, um, you know, I started to Hazelteen, um, Melanie, uh, Eakman, uh, so, you know, we, we all get together and, you know, we're, we're talking right now, uh, we've met with Skype and we kind of just, or not Skype or zoom and we just kinda figured out, you know, okay, here's kind of what we're leaning towards. And so, you know, we're all reading scripts and we're coming together and we're trying to decide what we feel will be our best production for next year. So that's really how the process works. Uh, we try to announce them, uh, at our awards banquet at the end of the year. So the students that have kind of an excitement over the summer to get ready for the next school year, or if they want to even prepare a little bit over the summer, they can.

Gary (39:32):

We've talked about our talent and being outstanding talent on the front of the stage. We've talked about tech and all the opportunities being safe and safe theater. This past fall we did singing in the rain and we had actual rain, which was insane. You know, he's talking about trying to make magic on the stage and that was magical. Where did that inspiration come from? I kind of know a little bit about the plumbing cause you happen, I happened to be in there one day when you were kind of showing me, which is part of the magic is not knowing how all that works. So talk a little bit about that. What, what was the inspiration behind singing in the rain in the set this year?

Phil (40:16):

Well, when we decided to do sing into the rain, we talked about it and I said it has to rain and I didn't know how we were going to make it rain. And so, you know, I spent the summer researching, I found some stuff on YouTube. It's like, here's some people that had done it this way. And um, you know, some people used video and had like just rain coming down. So it looked like rain and I was like, no, it's got to rain. I need, I need the actors to be soaked when this scene is over or the actor. Cause there's just one that, that one scene, um, I needed it to be soaked, I need it to rain. And so really I pulled together probably three or four different people's ideas online and said, okay, I think this is the way we're going to make it work.

Phil (41:00):

But I still wasn't sure about it. And so it really came down to, okay, here's the plan, but we have to be able to morph the plan if it doesn't work. And so, you know, I found a couple pumps. My, my uh, wife's grandfather's garage had an old sub pump and I found another pump that some of our maintenance team gave us one of their pumps. And I was like, all right, let's, let's just do it. And so we took garden hoses and we ran them up to these pipes on stage and then, but even that, we couldn't have the rain just coming out of holes cause then it would start on one side of the stage and just you'd, it kind of move across. So we pumped it up and it put gutters over top so that it would pump it, the water would have to fill the whole tube before it would start coming out all together.

Phil (41:42):

So it would come across evenly on stage, like real rain. Then it hit the gutters and then it just kind of trickled down like real rain. And so we had basically two lines on stage where the rain, so it gave it depth and it gave it, um, you know, space on stage. So it looked real. You had downspouts? Yeah, we had downspouts. So that was an afterthought. We were, I was like, you know what, let's put some downspouts on here. And so we actually had a student at our sink in our shop. So whenever we turn the pumps on from our water storage, we had a kid at the sink with another hose that was

out on splitter. And so that, that was fresh water from the sink that was coming out, the downspouts. So it, you know, and it, it just made it all look real.

Phil (42:21):

And I tell you what, I th the first time we had an audience and it rained, it goes to a blackout and all. And so we start up the water, it takes a few seconds for the water to pump up there and then all of a sudden you start hearing water. And so at first, you know, even, even though I knew it was real rain, my first thought was, Oh, that sounds like real rain. That's a pretty cool soundtrack. And then also the lights come on and you see this moment of rain on, I mean it just, I actually had tears in my eyes. It was, it was amazing.

Gary (42:59):

I have tears in my eyes now. I do. I, I just thought that in fact I posted something that the week of the show on Facebook, on the alumni page, and I went through and I kind of explained what I knew about it and my wife sees it on Facebook. Just get that off there. That's part of the magic. People don't need to know how it's all coming together. Oh yeah, that makes a lot of sense. So I deleted that post and uh, I gave up all the magic, I guess for a little while.

Phil (43:31):

So yeah, we, you know, on average for that four minute song, we went through about 80 gallons of water. And the magic of it all is it worked. The, the, the stage that we built over the stage, the drain system, the, it didn't leak. You know, I was the whole time thinking, man, we pull this floor up. I know I damaged that floor and it didn't, it it didn't leak. Um, you know, and then, uh, our, our last production, uh, you know, we typically take a picture of the seniors on stage and so, you know, we, we put the seniors up on stage and you know, when else are they going to have the opportunity to play at rain. So we turned on the rain for them and we just let it rain for probably about 10, 15 minutes. And then eventually the entire cast got up there and they all just played in the rain. It was that, again, I had tears in my eyes. It, it wasn't, it was a neat moment.

Gary (44:24):

Again, that goes back to you sitting in the back and you just talked about it. You know, just seeing it all unfold in front of you just had to be an awesome, awesome experience. We are going to take a break and we're going to come back for our last segment with Phil Anderson. We're going to talk about your service to our country and then we'll go into the Rebel Five questions. We'll be back with Phil Anderson on a Rebel Five podcast.

Break (44:49):

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Gary (45:08):

Alright, we're back on the Rebel Five podcasts with Phil Anderson. Again. Phil, thanks for spending your Tuesday morning with us on the Rebel Five . You mentioned earlier a couple of times about your military service. How did that come to be? You served for 20 years, right? Where did that come from? What was the motivation behind getting into the service?

Phil (45:38):

It was always in the back of my head. I really, I don't know, it was kind of a whim when I did it. I, you know, my, my father had been in the military. My grandfather was in the Navy, my uncle was in the Marines, my other uncle was in the army with Vietnam. And you know, they just, you know, all the men really in my family have served in some aspect of, you know, one way or another. And so it was always just in the back of my head. I wasn't really the most athletic person. I wasn't, you know, as physically fit as a lot of people. I mean, I, you know, I wasn't, you know, hugely overweight or gross or anything, but I just, I didn't really think of myself as a military person. I went to college my freshman year. I actually went to Indiana state university my freshman year and I was living with a guy, his name was Will Williams from Alabama. So why, why somebody who named their kid will Williams. But he was a great guy, great friend. You know, we've lost touch. I don't know where he's at now, but the two of us one day said, you know what, let's go join the military. And we did.

Phil (46:52):

So we went, we went to the recruiting station, joined the army national guard with nuts and hindsight. My mother was a little mad, uh, cause I didn't tell her about it. I just did it. And, but it was at the time, probably one of the best decisions I had made. You know, I, I was goofing around. I wasn't really serious about school. I needed some discipline in my life, a little bit more than I had had. And so, you know, that freshman year at Indiana state university, uh, you know, that summer, uh, after my freshman year, I went to training at Fort Leonard wood, Missouri. And, uh, I woke up to say the least. Uh, it was not an easy basic training. And from what I learned later is that, you know, the Fort Leonard wood basic is probably one of the hardest. Um, and then I stayed right after that to my, uh, my, uh, specialty training.

Phil (47:51):

I was an 88 Mike truck driver. Uh, it was the one that gave me the most money. I had a bonus to be a truck driver. And so they said I could have been whatever I wanted with my ASVAB scores, but I was like, you know what? This gives me a lot of money. I'm going to do this. So I, I became a truck driver. And so, uh, I went to truck driver school's data, Fort Leonard wood, Missouri for that. And then when that was over, I came back to Indiana state cause I was enrolled for my sophomore year, but school had already started at Indiana state. And so I, you know, I was like, huh, this all, I'll just be all right. Well, some weird happenstance. I had applied to Anderson university, but I never got a letter back saying that I was accepted.

Phil (48:35):

And so instead of following up like I should have, I just said, I must not have been accepted to it. So I went to Indiana State. Well, when I got back from basic training and AIT, there was a letter from Anderson university that I had been accepted a year later. It was the weirdest thing. So again, on a whim, I just said, huh. So I drove to Anderson university and I didn't call. I didn't, I just drove up there and I went into the admissions office and I said, Hey, I got this letter. Just wanted to see what's going on. Well, I don't know what happened, but I really, it was kind of a blur. Literally walked out. 30 minutes later I was enrolled at Anderson university. I had my class schedule all set and I, I called, uh, Indiana state university and canceled my classes.

Phil (49:24):

It's, so at that point, you know, I was in the right place. Anderson is where I needed to be. I needed that structure. I needed the religion aspect to it. And I grew a ton with their theatrical program that they have there. They have the, uh, a lot of Christian artists start their tours there. Uh, you got the Gaither brothers that are from there. You got Sandy, Patty, who I worked with and babysitter kids. Um, you, you just, you know, I had a great, uh, you know, a lot of opportunities to really learn a lot of technical stuff as well as the acting and stuff with the, with the theater program there. And so, you know, back to the military. I then, you know, was in the national guard. I was stationed at stout field and did my first half of my career. I was enlisted and, um, the whole time, you know, I kept getting little bugs in my ear, you should be an officer, you should be an officer.

Phil (50:15):

And I was like, eh, that's a lot of work. And so, um, I stayed at truck driver for awhile and then 11 happened and I was like, yeah, it should be an officer. Uh, and so I went, officer basic school became an officer. Uh, and then, uh, first Lieutenant second Lieutenant. Uh, and then I was a company commander as a second Lieutenant, but because our unit was getting ready to be deployed, they wanted to have a captain in the, in that position. So, um, I took the executives or executive officer position and, uh, we then got deployed in 05 or 04, 05 to Iraq was there for 12 months. Uh, Lucas was born. While was there a, was able to get home, thank goodness for his birth, and then I had to go right back. So I was home for just two weeks.

Phil (51:02):

They induced and, and got to see Lucas and all that. So it was, that was a great opportunity. We went back, uh, was in Iraq for a few more months before we came home. Uh, then again in 08, uh, this time I was a captain. I was company commander of, uh, another transportation unit. And so, uh, we went over there. This time MaKayla was being born and born right after we left, so I couldn't get back, but we were able to Skype and so I was on screen and I was able to see you and be there, uh, through Skype. Uh, while I was in Kuwait. Actually at that time I stayed in the military, you know, it

was over there for eight months. This time, uh, stayed in the military for a few more years. So I was able to retire, retired as a captain.

Phil (51:38):

Uh, you know, just like anything, they, they kind of hold stuff over your head when you're getting ready to do something. So they, they were like, you're, you're eligible for major if you want to stay. And I'm like, no, I didn't. I really, when I first joined was planning on doing just my minimum six years just to get some schooling help and, but, uh, it, it was a good choice. I, I really grew a lot. I gained a lot of discipline that I didn't have and I'm really glad I did it. And the national guard is the way to go cause I was able to start a career as a teacher and be in the military at the same time. And then, you know, in my 23 years of Roncalli, I was able to, to a lot of great things. You know, we, you know, we've done 40 since I've been there, 44 shows. Uh, I missed two of them because of Iraq. Uh, maybe three, I don't know. Somewhere in there. But uh, so, but you know, we were able to get people in that, that knew what they were doing to able to, you know, continue the program going while I was gone.

Gary (52:36):

Well I mentioned earlier and I'll repeat it. Thank you for your service. It's amazing what you have been able to do at Roncalli while you're doing all that. So thank you very much for serving your country and representing Roncalli. Looking back on that, Phil, had you stayed at ISU? Where would you be today?

Phil (52:56):

Honestly, if I stayed at ISU I probably would have gotten more into like the road show theater, so more like concerts and touring and that type of thing. Um, cause that's kind of where that was leading me to. Uh, not that that's bad by any means, but that's, that's probably more where I would have gone, you know, I didn't, I didn't feel right at that, that theater program, you know, they, there, they, they were trying to push and like theater does. A lot of times they try to push social backgrounds a little more and then I felt comfortable with and so, uh, you know, they were doing things on stage that I just felt was inappropriate if they were doing things that I just felt worn in. It just wasn't good. And so that was another reason why I just was ready to get away from there.

Gary (53:45):

I have one more question and then I'm going to ask you the Rebel Five questions. Uh, what's it mean to you when you have a past or former student, uh, pop in at school and say, Mr. Anderson, I'm doing this and this, it's in college and I just want to thank you for inspiring me to get involved. What's that mean to you?

Phil (54:07):

It means a lot. I mean it, there, there's, as a teacher you don't necessarily always see the fruit from your labor. You don't necessarily see what the seed grew into. And so when a student comes back, it just, it's an affirmation. And I think it's like that for any teacher, you know, you just get that affirmation of, of, of, you know what, I am doing the right thing. I have made a difference. I, um, you know, it, it's, and it, but it's not all about me. I really, I love seeing students succeed. I love seeing them grow. And that's really what it's about for me. I don't, I just, it's just an, it's a neat experience to see them succeed and that's, that's what I love. And so, yeah, it's, it's neat.

Gary (54:57):

The questions in another life, what would you want to be or do?

Phil (55:01):

I probably would enjoy doing some tour work with like some Christian rock bands and stuff like that. I, I had a great time doing that when I was at Anderson, uh, working with a lot of, you know, rock bands like DC talk and Newsboys and, um, and then when I was at the paramount theater in Anderson as well, I worked with a lot of great artists, uh, like Pat Boone and the McGuire sisters. And, um, just, just a lot of fun in that world. You get a, you get to meet a lot of people. You know, I think it's a sad world too though, because you're, you're never really tied down.

Gary (55:34):

Number two, favorite time or place when you've run into a wrong color person.

Phil (55:39):

Tell you what, I run into them all the time. Roncalli is so connected across the world. It doesn't matter where I go. We, whenever we travel with friends, sometimes we'll, we'll place a bet who's going to see somebody they know first. And most of the time I win because it's somebody that's connected to Roncalli. We'll see him at the airport, we'll see them, you know, wherever we go. And it's, it's just a, it's a neat family who always sticks together.

Gary (56:06):

I would agree. That's uh, that's pretty neat. Uh, what do you wish you could tell your younger self?

Phil (56:12):

Tell my younger self. I, I tell you what I've learned a lot over the years. I w we talked earlier about beauty and the beast. And so, you know, there, there are things in beating the beast that I wouldn't mind doing that production again, just because I've learned so much. Um, you know, I think our set would be even more amazing. I think our, um, but, you know, ultimately I just, I think I would tell my younger self to just go with it. You know, don't, don't worry about the little things. Don't worry about, you know, what other people think because that, that held me back for a long time cause I was always worried about what's this person thinking about me? What's this person that you know? And you know what? Now that I'm older and I think it's, you know, with age comes wisdom. Yeah, I care what people think, but really I don't care what people think. I mean, it's just, there's, you just, you just have to, you know, there's, there's sometimes there's, there's people that just aren't gonna like you and you know what, as long as you're not doing something deliberately to make that happen, it's their loss.

Gary (57:25):

I just want to thank you for sharing your, your Roncalli experience with us today. There's few things that I enjoy more. I've, I've alluded to it a couple of times, giving a school tour and stopping at the auditorium and talking about the amazing productions that you and your, your group, your directors and, and put on with the kids. And then after they've been in stream, extremely impressed by the facility, I take them around the corner to the 14 years of productions in that building. And always people are impressed by that. 43 44 shows that you've done at Roncalli, all the kids that have been involved in that is just an amazing thing. I'm so proud of our fine arts program and I love, as I just said, I love to show people that because they don't expect it. And especially when they've never been to a show and they come for the first time. It's an amazing thing and you are such a gift to Roncalli and I really, really mean that to put together such a great program over and over and over again year after year is something that I hope people don't take for granted because it is special. And, um, I just wanna thank you. Thank you for all you do for Roncalli. Let's get through this quarantine and get our kids back in the building so that they can continue to do wonderful productions. Thanks, Phil. Thanks for being here today. Thank you. Appreciate it.

Gary (59:02):

I'm Gary Armbruster and thanks for joining us today for this episode of the Rebel Five podcast. To learn more about the Rebel Five podcast, please visit [roncalli.org/podcast.php](http://roncalli.org/podcast.php). Again, thanks so much for joining us today and until next time, we'll fight ahead.