



OWPeople *Alumni newsletter* Spring 2024 Vol. 7

Our latest news:

Our 35th Anniversary season continues...

Join us for our Spring Musical!



OWP Presents
The Spitfire Grill
A Musical

Music and Book by James Valcq
Lyrics and Book by Fred Alley
Based on the film by Lee David Zlotoff



May 17 - 7:30pm
May 18 - 7:30pm
May 19 - 2:00pm
Bainbridge Town Hall Theatre
15 North Main Street



THE SPITFIRE GRILL is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals. www.concordtheatricals.com

In this story of second chances for grill patrons Effy, (Jenn Fowler) Caleb, (Andrew Perry) and Shelby (Jo Iversen) as well as the mysterious visitor (Osias Mealing), small town Wisconsin meets feisty ex-con Percy (Claire Nolan) when she starts work for grill

owner Hannah (Lori Koblanski) at the suggestion of sheriff/parole officer, Joe (Liam Herbert).

Based on the film by Lee David Zlotoff, *The Spitfire Grill* has, in the words of *USA Today*, "an abundance of warmth, spirit and goodwill, with some of the most engaging and instantly infectious melodies heard in an original musical."

For reservations, call (607) 287-6132. **Tickets are also available at the door, \$15 for adults & \$12 for seniors and students**

Parking is available behind the theater as well as in the municipal lot behind the Olde Jericho Tavern.

Join the PARTY!



Image by Freepik

Please come to the **JAC Art Gallery** before the show or during intermission to **celebrate OWP's 35th birthday!** View displays from shows over the years (and maybe find *your* photo!) and join us for some birthday cake!

For more information, find us on Facebook at Out of the Woodwork Players, Inc., or email owptheatre@yahoo.com.

News from OWP:

- OWP celebrated **National Poetry Month** in April with our **4th Annual Pageant of Poetry** online event and fundraiser. Poets and performers read their original or public domain poetry each day. The daily offerings were viewed on our Facebook page and enjoyed by many! We thank Libby Marshall for once

again organizing this event, which **raises funds for our annual theatre arts scholarship.**

- **OWP announce our annual Theatre Arts Scholarship!**
Every year beginning with our 30th anniversary in 2008, OWP has offered a scholarship to a graduating senior who has worked on or appeared in our shows and who plans to attend college and continue involvement in the performing or dramatic arts.
Application deadline is May 31, 2024.
Email OWP at owptheatre@yahoo.com for more information, or apply online [here](#).
- **Our Annual Board of Directors meeting** will be held on June 5 at 6:00 PM the Town Hall Theatre. This meeting is open to the public.
- **OWPeople alert:** Are you an OWP alum who is still involved in the arts? Email us with *your* story at owptheatre@yahoo.com

Our Featured Alumni: *Stephanie L. Steinbach Henry*

Our featured OWP alumna is Stephanie Henry, who appeared in OWP's first musical, *Godspell*, almost 35 year ago! Here is her story:

Beautiful City - I would like to express my many thanks to Denise Marshall for featuring me in the Out of the Woodwork Players Alumni Newsletter. It has been great fun to consider where I started and the path my theatre life has followed. Theatre really does change people's lives.

Prepare Ye - In the spring of 1990 I was a senior in high school. I thought I knew everything. I thought I knew, though I was only 17 years old, who I was. I thought I knew where I was going and what I was going to do with my life. I was about to graduate from high school. I was heading off to spend the summer at Williamstown Theatre Festival and then to NYU – Tisch School of the Arts to major in Acting. I

thought I had everything planned out. I had wanted to be an actor my entire life. There wasn't much in the way of theatre at my high school so I spent summers at places like Peterborough Players in New Hampshire and Hangar Theatre in Ithaca, and during the school year I auditioned for local community theatres to gain performance experience. In the spring of 1990 Out of the Woodwork Players was mounting a production of *Godspell*. It was their inaugural musical production. I was the only teenager in a cast of all adults, but I had watched the movie version about a hundred times on TV growing up, and I was determined to be a part of the production being put on at the Town Hall Theatre.



OWP's 1990 production of Godspell

Save the People - Looking back, it is clear to me that the experience of that moment, of being in *that* play with *that* specific cast, led by the ever-talented Denise Marshall, was not only incredibly special but one of the most enduring experiences of my life. I had always had an innate understanding that live theatre was remarkable and something I needed to be a part of, and I had filled my 17 years with as many theatre experiences as I could. But it was on the boards of the Town Hall stage that I started to truly formulate my understanding of the nature of storytelling, the beauty of working as an ensemble, and the power theatre has to transform. This was not the first experience of my theatre journey, but it was an important one.



OWP's 1990 production of Godspell

Day By Day - (Just kidding, that would take too long!) Here are some of the highlights - In the fall of 1990 I attended New York University and graduated with a BFA in Acting. After university I toured around the country with the National Theatre for the Performing Arts in a production of *Tartuffe* (performed in both French and English). I got my Master's in American Studies with a focus on Native Theatre Education from UCLA. I performed a lot. I played Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Elizabeth Proctor in *The Crucible*, Whitney in *A Piece of my Heart*, Mrs. Martin in *The Bald Soprano*, and Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, to name a few. I became an educator, teaching theatre full-time, and years after performing on the Bainbridge stage, I performed once again in *Godspell* with members of the faculty at my school. I also received an MEd from Lesley University in Creative Arts and Learning.



Stephanie (standing, center) appears as Sonia in a Framingham High School faculty production of Godspell

Learn Your Lessons - It was while in California at UCLA that I got the teaching bug. I was one of the founding members of an organization called Equal Opportunity Productions aka "EqOp." As an organization of theatre and education majors, we sought to bring the experience of theatre to students in the Los Angeles Unified School District and inner city schools through drama class and play production. Also at UCLA, I worked closely with Professor Hanay Geiogamah (playwright, director, historian) on "Project HOOP" (Honoring Our Origins and Peoples), a national, multidisciplinary initiative to establish Native American theater in tribal colleges, Native communities, K-12 schools, and mainstream institutions. And finally, I taught acting classes at the Native American Playhouse, an afterschool program for Native urban youth in Los Angeles County.

Light of the World - In late 1999 I returned to the east coast and settled in the Boston area. I continued to perform, but after my experiences in Los Angeles, I knew that what I wanted to do next was become a teacher. For 20 years I have been a theatre teacher at Framingham High School in Framingham, MA. During the school day I teach introductory and advanced acting classes, as well as specialized classes like Theatre for Young Audiences and Playwriting. I have found that playwriting has been especially rewarding to teach. Helping my students synthesize their ideas, creatively express their thoughts, and find their voice has been a particular source of pride for me. (In fact, while writing this feature I was notified that two of my students were named this year's winners of the Trinity Repertory Company's playwriting contest: Write Here, Write

Now.) In addition to teaching in a public school, in 2004 I co-founded ReACT Theatre Project to provide exceptional theatre experiences for school aged students during the summer. Through numerous grants ReACT was able to provide low-cost or no-cost theatre programs for all participants and focus on performing Shakespeare's classic plays. I am proud to say that thousands of students and community members were exposed to plays like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Love's Labor's Lost*, to name just a few productions.



Our Town at Framingham High School, directed by Stephanie Henry

By My Side - One of the wonderful aspects of my job is directing plays in the extra-curricular extension of the Fine and Performing Arts department at Framingham High School. I have had the pleasure of directing some of my favorite plays over the years such as *Our Town*, *Sweeney Todd*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *Treasure Island*, *The Little Prince*, *The Skin of Our Teeth*, and *Shakespeare in Love*. When I engage student actors, designers, and technicians in the process of mounting a production, I am reminded of the ideas and ideals that I started to develop when I was a teenager performing in *Godspell*: telling an honest and truthful story with an ensemble of hardworking people will allow us to shine a light on humanity, see ourselves and

each other with kindness and grace and maybe change the world (or our little corner of it). Also, theatre is just plain fun! I learned that from being in *Godspell* too!



Peter and the Starcatcher at Framingham High School, directed by Stephanie Henry

On the Willows - A few years ago I came across the note Denise had written to me at the close of the show back in the spring of 1990. I had held onto the important memories and lessons of that experience, but I had forgotten all about the note. As I sat there reading her words to me, how she saw me as an actor and as a teenager and as a member of the cast, I was truly overwhelmed. And in that moment I was reminded how Denise had given up being in the cast of *Godspell* so that the play would have a director (I don't remember the circumstances around who was supposed to direct or why she needed to take over). We were lucky to have her leading the way, but I know she missed being on stage with us. I also remember listening to the sound of her voice as she sang on *On the Willows* from off stage every night. It was all part of the beautiful story she was guiding us to tell, the community she was building and the transforming power of theatre. I am deeply grateful for my *Godspell* experience of 35 years ago, one that has continued to be a part of me and always will be.

In Review: Remember when...?

34 Years Ago – In March 1990, OWP presented our first musical, *Godspell*. Denise Marshall directed.

30 Years Ago – In March 1994, Rich Cuthbertson directed *The Diary of Anne Frank*.



25 Years Ago – In May 1999, OWP celebrated 10 years in the tradition of the first Variety Show fundraisers with *Anniversary Acts*.



20 Years Ago – In May 2004, Denise Marshall directed the musical *The Boy Friend*.

15 Years Ago – In March 2009, OWP celebrated their 20th anniversary with the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*. Denise Marshall directed.



That same year, in June, the celebration continued with Rich Cooley directing his first OWP show, *Murder on the Rerun*.

10 Years Ago – In April 2014, *The Sound of Music* rang out in celebration of OWP's 25th season. Denise Marshall directed.



5 Years Ago – In April 2019, kindred spirits came together for the musical *Anne of Green Gables*, which marked 30 years of OWP theatre. Denise Marshall directed.