

An Amazing and Illuminating History of St. Aidan's Dymphna Productions – Updated 10-24-23

In 2003, our rector Nedi Rivera (who left for Bishop appointments in Washington and Oregon) had the wonderful idea that St. Aidan's had plenty of talented actors that could create a dinner theatre patterned after Teatro Zinzanni as a terrific fundraiser. Nedi worked with Dee La Duke, Pam Wong and Elisa Elliott to create a play with musical acts with characters patterned after actual parishioners. The creative team chose the setting of St. Dymphna's Parish since St. Dymphna, as the patron saint of the mentally ill, seemed appropriate to watch over the wild and zany antics of the characters. Amazing highlights from the productions are listed here.

2003: St. Dymphna's 13th Annual Bingo and Cabaret Extravaganza. Elisa Elliott, Producer, created a grand event with 4 performances, a 4-piece band and Nedi as the Master Chef preparing a four-course dinner. The play was written by Dee La Duke, scriptwriter for *Girl Friends*, and was directed by Pam Wong. The audience members play Bingo, but no one ever wins. Michael Jennings appeared as the Chef and Elaine Jennings as the Chanteuse. In the finale, Father George (Matt Gray), the mild-mannered priest who occasionally whipped off his cassock to sing an Elvis rock and roll hit, married the couple. Dave Frangquist shaved off his beard to perform as Mother Mary and few parishioners recognized him in the play. Debbie Nocero, who originated the role of Hazel, persuaded the cast and crew to show up in pajamas for the Sunday service after the play closed since it seemed we had been living at the church for weeks.

2004: St. Dymphna's 13th Annual Bingo and Cabaret Extravaganza, Take 2: Elisa again produced, Pam directed and Nedi prepared the elegant dinner. A new chef in the play could not go on for the last performance due to illness. Ray Wong learned the major part in 5 hours and didn't miss a line. Students from Aidan's Way, St. Aidan's after school program, and the parish performed a song and dance number as part of the action. Sadie (Nancy Sabin) appeared for the first time and did a dance routine using Reddi-Whip cans to the tune of *Whip It* by The Cars. Deacon Diana Wheeler portrayed Sister Hibernia, with her cart of absurd religious tchotchkes for sale. Bingo is discussed throughout the play but never played.

2005: Whatever Happened to Bingo? Matt Gray wrote and directed the 3rd Dymphna production. This time Bingo is played and everyone in the audience wins resulting in a Conga line with spontaneous dancing. Betsy Eddy continued as Stage Manager and began producing the shows as well. Elaine and Michael Jennings' Small Potatoes Catering provided the buffet dinner.

2006: Dymphna Idol: Again, Dymphna is written and directed by Matt Gray with a return to a sit-down dinner. Kevin Lee Junius made his debut as Bebe Sweetbriar that launched his successful career in film and special appearances as a drag queen performer. Scrumbly Koldewyn, legendary Cockettes star, joined the production as Music Director and show accompanist. Brother Julian (Geordie Lynch) and Sister Julian

(Laura McVittie) performed a hysterical interpretive dance to *The Rose*. The Dynamerrific Ladies: Betty Carmack, Helen Crowell, Natalie Lloyd, Barbara Purcell, Lois Roach and Mileva Saulo performed the best burlesque ever danced by woman over 60 years of age. Jim Oerther served as their choreographer.

2007: It's All About Me? Matt Gray wrote and directed the 5th Dymphna in which the Dymphnans learn the true meaning of community after trying to one up each other competing for a cruise. Sadie (Nancy Sabin) and Don Four Corners DeFerro (Frank Derfield) performed a hilarious scene from *Streetcar Named Desire*. Malcolm Donaldson played Stella Kowalski in the scene. Our new rector, Tommy Dillon, appeared as the seedy Ralph Reedy, cruise tour director, in red shoes.

2008: Tony and Tony's Wedding: After Father George (Matt Gray) and Sister Julian (Laura McVittie Gray) in real life ran off to Norway, Sarah Glover stepped in to write a play celebrating gay marriage. Sadie, the larger-than-life diner waitress and aspiring actress (Nancy Sabin) turned wedding planner, leads the action toward the wedding finale after Tony's (Keith Koller) parents (Sandy Sullivan and Paul Nocero) accept Anthony (David Stickley) as their son-in-law even though he is an accountant and not a doctor or lawyer. That their son is gay does not faze them at all. Elaine Jennings directed and appeared in the show.

2009: Waiting for Garchik: Sarah Glover named her play for Leah Garchik, the SF Chronicle columnist, who graciously permitted use of her name. In the show, the Dymphnans attempt a production of the Sound of Music, directed by Sadie, in order to fulfill their dream of making it to the big time – Grace Cathedral. Hazel (Debbie Nocero) and Mabel (Barbara Stevenson) sang about menopause to the tune of *My Favorite Things*. John Ellsworth performed as Brother Julian and also directed the play. Victoria Tedder greatly improved the show quality by serving as the rehearsal pianist and singing *Climb Every Mountain* to Mother Mary's pantomime. Ms. Garchik came to see the play, loved it and ran an item about the show in her column.

2011: Murder in the Snickerage: When Sarah Glover was not available due to publishing her book, *Grave Refrain: A Ghost/Love Story*, John Wilk wrote and directed the 8th Dymphna. In the show, all the characters think they are guilty of killing Dr. Who (Ray Wong). All is well as Dr. Who appears at the end of the show. Sisters of the Wholly Rude (JoEllen Brothers, Michaela Sabin Hinds, Barbara Purcell and Britney Wheat) danced and sang throughout the show but Lou Seal (Ray Wong) stole the show dancing in at the wrong times with a fake fish. Pam Wong talked Janet Lohr into playing Hazel on Janet's first visit to St. Aidan's.

2012: Belgium, It Must Be Tuesday: Again, John Wilk wrote and directed as the event became a theatre presentation without dinner. Sadie persuades the parishioners to bid on a tour of Europe in order to reunite with her love, Haircurl Trousseau (Frank Derfield). Love is lost and found on the Dymphna whirlwind three-day Happiness Tour of the capitals of Europe. Lee Hammack's drawings of the Coliseum, Leaning Tower of Pisa, Eifel Tower and Chateau danced across the stage by Mr. Peanut (Robert Ayala) delighted the audience.

2013: Altar Oregano: In the 10th Dymphna production, written and directed by John Wilk, the eccentric characters compete in Food Network star Bobby B-Trayed's (Robert Geesey) Pizza Bake Off in order to raise funds to save the vicarage. Along the way, the evil Lola (Michael Vetter/Anne Benninger) causes unusual and hilarious transformations to happen to each character. Wild and hilarious pizza making leads up to Sadie using the secret ingredient (jello of course) to win the prize for the Dymphna Amateur Theatre Company. Angelique (Anne Benninger) and Choreographer, Pam Wong, topped off the finale with a superb tap dance ending Let's Do the Time Warp Again from the Rocky Horror Picture Show.

2014: Lost and Fo_nd, A Pirate Adventure: This show features the Dymphnans as they race to beat a band of pirates to the buried treasure on the magical Dessert Isle filled with tasty treats, knishes and ganaches. The show was written and directed by John Wilk with music direction by Scumbly Koldewyn. Preeti Mann provided amazing choreography including the show highlight – a German Slap Dance. Other highlights included a pirate ballet to *The Blue Danube Waltz*. Sarah Glover and Robert Geesey sang a titillating *These Eyes*. Dave Frangquist as Mother Mary sang *Modern Church Historical* to the Gilbert and Sullivan's *Modern Major General* tune and didn't miss a word. Janet Lohr gathered the courage to lead the treasure hunt by singing an amazing *Walk with Me Lord*. Michaela Sabin Hinds as Flo and Gilligan figured out many of the clues that stumped her clueless colleagues. Dave Frangquist and Brad Robertson sang *Love to Laugh* from *Mary Poppins* and proved that Dave really can sing. Once everyone figured out that the missing letter in the title was "U" or "You", all sang a jazz tempo *Amazing Grace*.

2015: The Divine Dymphna (To Heaven, Hell and Back in 3 Acts): Sarah Glover's amazing script and Scumbly Koldewyn's musical direction provided a charming and hilarious romp in which a mysterious stranger helps to gather the St. Dymphna staff and parishioners back from a boring heaven and an outrageous hell. Jim Oerther, Fadder Mudder (God), started off the show with a rousing *If I Were a Dymphnan (Rich Man)*. Dave Frangquist as Mother Mary Antoinette lip-synched to *Disco Inferno* revealing red garters and hose. Lee Hammack, making his theatrical debut as the Bartender, Demon and Gabriel, trumpeted his way to Dymphna fame. Janet Lohr performed a thrilling *Stormy Weather* in torment over losing her true love, Lola. Nancy Sabin, the heart of many Dymphna shows, led *You Gotta Have Heart* and *It's a Wonderful World*. *Soul Man* and *Signed, Sealed, Delivered* led by Anne Benninger and Robert Geesey were showstoppers. No one will ever forget the wall of excrement in hell created by Nancy in which the flatterers wailed, and hands and feet danced to Sarah singing *Sorry Seems to be the Hardest Word*.

2016: The Hop: John Wilk's script propelled various groups to compete at the hop battle of the ages. Scumbly Koldewyn's music direction and accompaniment motivated the cast to sing their hearts out. Rachel Nip's choreography inspired the actors to perform 1950's rock music parodies. The actors began the action with a magical touch by playing Pokémon Go. Dave Frangquist (Mother Mary Antoinette) in disguise as a shepherdess sang Angel Baby to Angelique (Anne Benninger). Nancy Sabin (Sadie) and Amiel Puducay (Otto) sang and danced to Mucki mein Schnucki. Rachel Nip (Sister

Gillian) sang a humorous and delightful Cryin'. Janet Lohr (Hazel) sang an amazing Walk on by Faith. The finale featured Robert Ayala (Brother Julian) and Rebecca MetzgerMurray (Conseulo) booming out a joyous La Bamba. Newcomers Patty DeVlieg (Alice) and Dan Rosen (Father Norman) added humor and pizzazz. Perry Tom (Rupert), beloved St. Aidan's community member, made his debut singing and dancing. The talent and helpfulness of the cast to pitch in on all aspects of the show was wonderful!

2017: Rescue Me: In St. Aidan's 14th original musical comedy St. Aidan's sanctuary was transformed into an animal care and protection shelter in which John Wilk's script tenderly portrayed the love between animal companions and humans mostly from the dogs' perspectives. Rachel Nip's choreography inspired the actors to perform many beautiful and upbeat songs including the hilarious *Can-Can* performed by all the dogs. Dave Frangquist (Mother Mary Antoinette) and Janet Lohr (Hazel) performed two hilarious song and dance numbers. The dogs played by Anne Benninger, Dora Guan, Marc Powell, Megan Dueck, Nancy Sabin, Perry Tom, Rebecca MurrayMetzter and Robert Ayala pleaded to be adopted in a rousing *Rescue Me*. Nancy Sabin added flare with her design and construction of all the dog costumes. The set depicting a dog shelter was designed and constructed by John Wilk with an assist by Sally Rosen who painted the panels for the Dogs for Rescue store.

2018: Summer of Love, Luv: The highlight of the show was Nedi Rivera, Bob Moore and Cameron Partridge appearing as Bob as Peter, Paul and Mary singing *If I Had a Hammer*. Nedi, our former rector, created the shows 16 years ago because she felt St. Aidan's had a wealth of talented actors and singers to create shows as major fundraisers. The script, written and directed by John Wilk, propelled the actors to time travel via way back glasses between 2018 and 1967 in order to prevent a hostile takeover of St. Dymphna's Church. Many favorite tunes of the Summer of Love moved the action along. Other highlights included the music direction and accompaniment by Scrumby Koldewyn; choreography by Megan Dueck; many new talented singers that joined the cast; and a huge Trump Twitter Bird created by Nancy Sabin.

2019: The Elves of Presley: Christmas comes in November when Elphus, King of the Elves from Presley, and Mother Mary lead the church holiday fundraiser. Much merriment and bah, humbug attitudes mixed together for a laugh filled play. Many memorable moments included 14 actors all in elves' costumes coordinated by Nancy Sabin; Scrumby Koldewyn's lovely arrangements for *We Three Kings/God Rest Ye and Silent Night* and *I will Follow Him*; Melanie Wickersheim beautifully singing *All By Myself* and *You'll Never Walk Alone*; and Perry Tom saying the best lines in the show!

2020: Ranch Dressing Preview: Scrumby Koldewyn and John Wilk created a 12-minute video with memorable songs from the play with the hope of staging the show after the Covid quarantine. The video was shown at the St. Aidan's fundraiser as part of the entertainment.

2021: Dymphna Sampler: John Wilk and Betsy Eddy created a video of many of the memorable moments in Dymphna history that was shown at the St. Aidan's fundraiser in March 2021. The video brought back memories of Matt Gray impersonating Elvis; the

Dynamerrific Church Ladies: Betty Carmack, Helen Crowell, Natalie Lloyd, Barbara Purcell, Lois Roach and Mileva Saulo performing the best burlesque ever danced by woman over 60 years of age. Nancy Sabin as Carmen Demanda in *Altar Oregano*; Ray Wong as Lou Seal in *Murder in the Snickerage*; and Let's Do the Time Warp again in *Altar Oregano* featuring the amazing tap dancing of Pam Wong and Anne Benninger.

2023: Ranch Dressing: Memories are waiting to be made when the show is staged on Nov. 10. 11 and 12.

Fondly compiled by Betsy Eddy who has been inspired by the talents of all involved in the Dymphna Productions from the very first show.