

MUSICAL MASQUERS ANNOUNCE 50th COMMUNITY THEATER SEASON

Shows, Reunion and Dinner Theater Planned

West Bend's Longest Running Community Theater – Musical Masquers, Inc. embarks on their 50th year of community theater. The season includes two shows that are audience favorites; **“The Sound of Music”** and **“Steel Magnolias”** - in addition to their 50th anniversary celebration and diner theater show - **“That’s Broadway.”**

The organization has presented over one hundred-twenty shows through the years. Some charter members of the organization are still active with the group. Jan Rogne who was there as a cast member in the founding years stays active with the group these days. She is the lead costumer for **“Sound of Music”** this year.

During the 50 years; ‘Masquers’ (as they refer to themselves,) have been active in West Bend producing theatre, they have staged as many as four shows per season. Every season includes a musical – The group started with **“The Pajama Game”** in 1962, as well as comedies and the occasional foray into drama. Popular shows may be staged a second time, as is the case with **“The Sound of Music.”** It was previously staged in the 1978-79 season.

The 2012 season for Musical Masquers opens with **“The Sound of Music”** at the UWWC Theater on the Hill, running June 15 through June 23rd. A cast of over 50 will populate the stage for the family-friendly production. **“The Sound of Music”** tells the semi-biographical story of the Von Trapp family, set in Austria during the rise of the Nazi party preceding World War II. Famous songs from **“The Sound of Music”**

include “Do-Re-Mi,” “Edelweiss” and “Climb Every Mountain.” Director John Brandl is especially looking forward to working with the double-cast of Von Trapp children and the Nun’s chorus of over 20 voices.

In December, Masquers will present **“Steel Magnolias.”** The comedy was made into a film starring Dolly Parton, Shirley McLaine, and Julia Roberts. The show will run through New Year’s Eve. The show features the tight-knit friendship of six women who frequent Truvvy’s Beauty Salon as they deal with gossip, weddings, relationships and diabetes. Special diabetes awareness, and special promotions for Salon Stylists are part of the marketing plan for **“Steel Magnolias.”** The show will be directed by Nancy Storrs who also directs West Bend **“A Christmas Carol.”** – Storrs will be doing those shows back-to-back this year.

Cast and crew members have entertained “thousands in the community,” according to Nancy Mason, one of the organizations long-time members. Mason has been active as an actress, theatrical show director, and board member many times over the years. This year, Mason is chairman of the 50th Anniversary celebration events. “On average, we have four performances of each show, with several hundred people seeing each show every night. Conservatively, we estimate that over 50,000 audience members have filled seats. Often shows have sold out, and “once; due to weather, there was an audience of just four – but that was the very rare exception,” laughed Mason. To celebrate their 50 year anniversary, Musical Masquers has planned two major events for later this year:

On September 28th, Musical Masquers will host a 50 year reunion at Regner Park which is being billed as “The World’s Largest Cast Party.” Anyone who has participated in shows as a member of the cast or crew

of any show over the past 50 years is invited to join in the fun. “There will be people visiting from out of state, and we already know that many former cast members will be there... The casual event will include Karaoke show tunes, brats, and of course beer. Theater groups are known for their after show celebrations – and Masquers has long practiced the tradition of holding social gatherings. This event is for former cast and crew, but still “we’re treating it like a show.” At planning meetings, this cast party is called ‘Beer Brats and Broadway’ says committee member Rick Gilbertson. Former cast members should watch the website – MusicalMasquers.org for details.

On September 29th, Musical Masquers will present **“That’s Broadway”** an original musical and theatrical review show featuring a look back on 50 years of theater in West Bend. Past and present cast members will take the stage in a showcase format. **“That’s Broadway”** will take place at the Columbian (Knights of Columbus) Hall as a dinner theater presentation. Performances for the 50th Anniversary celebration will include song, dance, and sketches by Nancy Mason, Rick Gilbertson, Sue Steinbach Gilberston, Dan Robertson, and tribute selections by other past and present cast members. The highlights and tributes will make it an evening not to be missed for audience who love theater.

Those needing more information on any of the upcoming shows or events can contact Nancy Mason at 262-306-3585.

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