

Starting the Vienna Theater Company and Funny Memories of the Cast/Crew

CG: How did the Vienna Theater Company get started?

BC: The high school students that he directed at Madison went off to college. They came home at Christmas and said, 'Let's have a summer show. We're not performing in college—we're doing this and that.' So, we did a couple summer shows. Then the town of Vienna—I think it was when we took 'Godspell' there for the Booster's Club, the Athletic Booster's Club—Vienna sponsored us. They eventually allowed us to incorporate, with their lawyer, and we became the Vienna Theater Company. But the first one they sponsored was in 1971. Then it was in '83 or '85 I think when we were an actual, verifiable 1-C3 Corporation, still sponsored by the town of Vienna. So most of our Board and most of our performers were Vienna people. Our mission was to bring theater to Vienna and allow Vienna to participate as an audience, back-stage, on-stage. We had people on stage that would really probably not be cast other places. They had a ball. And they were good. It was wonderful.

I remember the first play we did under the title of 'Vienna Theater Company', actually with the town, was 'Barefoot in the Park'. After that we took off for vacation at Rehoboth Beach. All of a sudden, we had the cast from 'Barefoot in the Park' knocking on our door. They slept on the front porch and on the floor.

I can remember Kevin and Myles on stage in 'Odd Couple'—Kevin Adams and Myles Meehan. They couldn't remember their lines. They had to run off stage. Both of them. I don't know why *both* went. They got their lines. Then Kevin had a black-out on his lines in '1776'. Of course, it was cast with all of his buddies, his beer-drinking buddies from the Vienna Inn, high school friends and everything. They're all there to help each other. He turns around and looks at them for a line. They all just go (crosses arms). They wouldn't give him the line.

DS: It was challenging using that big gym for the show. It was hard to have privacy to run off and disappear and put your costume back on and be quiet back there when it was all just one big room. Before the theater was built, it was a lot harder.

BC: We used to put a stage up and a curtain up. We had our share of mishaps. Then we decided to put people on the risers, instead of the stage up, and look down. Then we enclosed the risers with 4X8 flats and painted. I know '1776' had townhouses, Williamsburg townhouses; 'Sound of Music' had the sky and the clouds. Then an old lady fell off the back of the risers one night with her chair. And then Allison, when she was in 'Sweet Charity', my daughter had a mishap. Because it was the gym, they had put a big pole up with a curtain so we could close the curtain. It got taken down in between the shows and evidently was not put up properly. She's singing a solo on stage and the huge bar and everything come down right in front of her. She finished the solo and came off-stage and started crying.

CG: What building was that in?

BC: The gym at the Community Center.

VH: You mentioned that a theater was built. Where and when did that happen?

BC: September 1988.

VH: Was that part of the Community Center?

BC: Oh yes. From '71 on we were a part of the Community Center.