



O.P.E.R.A. Inc.

Winter 2012

ART SHOWS

The Lobby and Gallery has lived up to its title by hosting several Art Shows this past year. The large blank walls are very welcome to artists when they exhibit their works. A new paint job this spring and a hanging system made it easier to put up pictures.

Local photographer Ken Schmierer had a showing of his work during the All-School Reunion. "Dakota Iconic" photos filled the Gallery with local and rural scenes. They generated much conversation and some were purchased by returning alumni. We can always count on Ken for his photography expertise during our events. An exhibit of local artists' work was on display during this year's AppleFest fall festival in September. Sketches, photography, ceramics. Jewelry, paintings, and fabric works filled the Gallery.

In October, the North Dakota Museum of Art brought its fourth exhibit to the Opera House Lobby and Gallery. "Winged Shadows: Life Among Birds" was on display from Oct. 12 to the 21st. This event was sponsored by the Ellendale Area Arts Council. The traveling exhibit was visited by local school children as well as people from the surrounding area.

Jami Eberle had her second photography exhibit titled "373 DAYS" in the Lobby and Gallery the last two weeks in October. Her photos present a unique perspective of every day life.

The community had the opportunity once again to experience the photography of Roddy MacInnes. This time the walls were covered with "Community Portraits", pictures of local folks that he had taken over a period of time. The 8x11 pictures were for sale with the profit donated to

OPERA. Roddy is an instructor at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Several years ago he was our "Artist in Residence" for the Ellendale, Oakes and LaMoure Schools. His pleasing personality and Scottish brogue make him a favorite person to visit with.

Presently the Ellendale Area Arts Council has its wreaths on display for a Silent Auction. The homemade creations add to the Christmas decor

MUSIC AT THE OPERA HOUSE

The Ellendale Area Arts Council sponsored a tribute to North Dakota's own great jazz singer Peggy Lee. On May 18, Kate Stevenson from Jamestown presented the concert "From Norma Egstrom to Miss Peggy Lee" in the Lobby. What a treat to hear those 'oldies'.

The Opera House Lobby and Gallery was once again the site for several musical shows this year. Bob Milne, ragtime and boogie-woogie pianist, returned to Ellendale on June 9 for a performance of "Ragtime Classics". The world-renowned artist performed on the Dunphy piano to a sell-out crowd. We were very fortunate to have Bob come to Ellendale a second time and we hope to have him return for another engagement.

On October 5th Willie Wolff and his friends came up from the Aberdeen area to hold a Jam Session. Six musicians playing guitars, accordion, fiddles and banjo provided two-hours of old time and familiar songs for our enjoyment. The group likes to play in the Lobby and local people turn out to listen and to dance.

Music can be heard in the lobby several days of the week and some evenings as piano students of Katie Miller and guitar students of Justin Meidinger come to their lessons. Katie is giving lessons on the Dunphy piano. Justin has turned the former store room into a music and recording studio. He also helps with the PA system during Opera events. Katie's business is called "Keynote Studios" and Justin's is "Backroom Studios".

SILENT AUCTION

O.P.E.R.A., INC. held a Silent Auction in June during the All-School Reunion. Many items were displayed in the lobby of the Ellendale School's New Athletic Facility during alumni registration. A fighting Sioux golf bag, an end table, an afghan in Cardinal colors, two Pete Retzlaff signed footballs, a half-hour plane ride, Coca Cola items, Disney memorabilia, paintings by area artists, and NJ Jersey, a doll closet, Sales Barn picture, framed wildlife picture, t-shirts, Masters Golf Tournament items, autographed books and many others were offered. Alumni and other visitors enjoyed the bidding and waited to see if their bid would be the last one when the auction closed. It proved to be a good fundraiser for our organization. THANK YOU to all who donated and participated.

SMITHSONIAN "KEY INGREDIENTS: AMERICA BY FOOD" EXHIBIT COMING IN MAY

The Opera House Lobby and Gallery will be the site for another Smithsonian Exhibit next May and June. "Key Ingredients: America by Food" is a Museum on Main Street exhibit, from the Smithsonian in Washington, DC. Ellendale is one of twelve smaller communities in North Dakota chosen to host the traveling exhibit. It is being sponsored by the Smithsonian, North Dakota Humanities Council, Ellendale Historical Society, O.P.E.R.A., Inc., the Ellendale Area Arts Council and the city of Ellendale.

"Key Ingredients: America by Food" explains the little known, the everyday and the obvious through an entertaining and informative overview of our

country's diverse regional cooking and eating traditions. It investigates how culture, ethnicity, landscape and tradition influence food and flavors we enjoy across the nation. The exhibit consists of five kiosks, which are titled "Land of Plenty", "Local Flavors", "Dynamic Delivery", "Festival of Feasts" and "Home Cooking".

Two pre-events to the actual exhibit have been held in the Lobby. A German Supper was served in November and "A Taste of Scandinavia" in December. These gave guests a sampling of those two ethnic foods. Other events are planned for the coming months, which include an apron history presentation, a cook car talk and demonstration, and possibly a cooking class. The Gala, which opens the exhibit, will be held May 4, 2013 on Ellendale's Main Street.

The last Smithsonian Exhibit "Journey Stories" was held in Jan-Mar 2010 and had 1200 visitors, many of which were area school children. The committee is hoping for a larger attendance this time because of more conducive weather. If you would like to be a 'docent' or assist in any way, contact Chairpersons Jeanette Ruenz, Ken Schmierer, John Boekelheide or DeeAnne Gall.

OTHER EVENTS AT THE OPERA HOUSE

The Lobby and Gallery is used often for a variety of events. Two informational seminars on tree care were given in August and September by Tom Rude. Tom is a retired forester who has chosen Ellendale for his retirement home. His love for trees, his expertise and willingness to share is a great asset to our community. He also lends his carpenter skills to work that needs to be done at the Opera House.

Laughter filled the walls as Comedian Gordy Pratt entertained on October 6th. The stand-up musical comedy played to a nearly full house.

Another comedian gave a performance during AppleFest. Scott Novotny was sponsored by Dr. Lana Schlecht as part of her 25th year celebration of dentistry in Ellendale. His performance was held in the auditorium.

Joan Hoffman rented the Lobby for an election night gathering.

The VFW Auxiliary rented the Lobby for their annual Bake Sale in November.

The Lobby was used in December for a college graduation reception. Jeff Langley, an OPERA board member, received his Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management from NSU on December 8th.

We are very glad that the Lobby is used often. It presents an opportunity to tell our story and to show the auditorium and explain the restoration project.

JESSIE DUNPHY STRAND PIANO

The baby grand piano of legendary piano teacher Jessie Dunphy Strand that was used by many Ellendale piano students has found a home in the Lobby & Gallery area of the Opera House. The piano was donated by Jessie's grandson, Dick Dunphy of Hudson, NH who thought it appropriate that the piano return home to the community where it may once again be used and enjoyed.

After the piano's arrival, it was given some tender loving care with John Boekelheide supplying a lot of elbow grease to bring the piano's appearance back to life. The piano was subsequently tuned and was used by renowned ragtime piano player Bob Milne when he gave his concert at the Opera House in June.

In September, the piano again was being used to teach students as Katie Miller is now giving instruction at the Opera House to a new generation of aspiring musicians. Katie is not the only one giving instruction at the Opera House. Justin Meidinger has been give guitar lessons since March. In addition, Justin has transformed a former storage area of the Opera House into a recording studio.

OPERA, INC. PRESENTS "FRAMED"

In 2011, OPERA, Inc. was proud to present the world premiere of an original play written by Ellendale's own Al Nolan entitled, "Squawk for Murder". In 2012, the sequel, "Framed" was presented in the upstairs auditorium of the Opera House. The play was once again directed by Al Nolan and featured the continuing adventures of private investigator MacKenzie King (Grant Crabtree) who finds himself wrongly accused of murdering a new client, Audrey Kieffer (Nola Schweitz) who also happens to be the wife of local mob boss, Robert Kieffer (John Boekelheide).

Stuck in a jail cell, King needs to find the real killer and prove his innocence. To help him, he has to rely on two police investigators – one a friend, Officer Sarah Zell (KaSaundra Peterson) and one a foe, Detective Sandy Callahan (Alura Schweitz) who thinks King is probably guilty. Also lending a hand is Mac's nosy assistant, "Slick" Johnson (Megan Roehl).

Suddenly, a woman who says she is the real Audrey Kieffer shows up and claims that the murdered victim was an imposter. This creates a double mystery – who killed the woman in King's office and what is the true identity of the deceased?

Zell and Callahan interrogate members of the Kieffer family and household to shed light on the mysteries. They first interview Kathleen Edwards (Chloe Thurber), Robert Kieffer's secretary who may have a crush on her boss and animosity toward Audrey Kieffer.

Tony Ludeman (Al Nolan), Robert Kieffer's mob lieutenant, next comes under scrutiny of the investigators from which more information about the Kieffers is revealed as well as possible motives for him being tagged as the killer.

Next for Sarah and Sandy is Trudy Kieffer (Michelle Langley), daughter of Robert and step-daughter of Audrey. It is revealed that she doesn't like her mother-in-law and becomes yet another suspect.

Mob Boss Kieffer is then grilled, concentrating on establishing a timeline and exploring motives as to who would want to kill his wife.

Finally, Audrey Kieffer is interviewed, but Zell gets Callahan to agree to talk to her in front of King's jail cell. During the interrogation, Mack surreptitiously gets a sample of Audrey Kieffer's hair. After Audrey is allowed to leave, Callahan, who still thinks King did it, gives King a few parting shots. Zell stays behind and updates him on all the info obtained from the interrogations.

As the final act opens, Slick brings King information she has uncovered from her investigations at Mack's behest. From this King realizes what really happened.

All the characters are assembled at the scene of the murder as a handcuffed King, one by one, goes through each suspect's possible motives. King finally makes his big reveal, informing everyone that it was actually the real Audrey Kieffer who was killed and that the woman now posing as her was actually Robert Kieffer's mistress, Johanna Stewart, who was surgically altered to impersonate Audrey. The entire charade was the brainchild of Robert Kieffer who actually murdered his wife to keep her from revealing his nefarious activities to King.

Unfortunately, Slick lets it slip out that the medical records about the plastic surgery were obtained illegally. Robert appears to be off the hook as the evidence would not be admissible in court, so he and Ms. Stewart prepare to leave.

However, King realizes he has another bit of evidence – the hair sample that he picked up, which proves that Johanna is not Audrey. Kieffer realizes he is doomed and makes an attempt to get at King only to be stopped by Ludeman. Kieffer and his mistress are cuffed and led away as King and Slick celebrate. The rest of the suspects are dismissed with an admonition to Trudy to legitimize her father's business operations.

Callahan then apologizes to King for thinking he was guilty and uncuffs him. But after King gives Slick a smack to the back of the head for almost blowing the case, Callahan recuffs him and puts him under arrest for assault. Slick finds this

amusing until she gets cuffed as well for breaking and entering and gaining illegal access to personal information. The pair is led off with King fruitlessly protesting.

The final play of this trilogy by Al Nolan is entitled, "Simple & Odd", is to be presented at the Opera House in 2013.

STAND UP COMEDY AT THE OPERA HOUSE

The Opera House saw two professional stand-up comedians perform at the Opera House this fall. During Ellendale's annual AppleFest celebration, Scott Novotny brought his zany, family-oriented routine to Ellendale and filled the upstairs auditorium with laughter. Scott was sponsored by Dr. Lana Schlecht as a free event to commemorate her 25th year of her dentistry practice in the community.

In October, Gordy Pratt performed in the Lobby & Gallery and put on a great show to an appreciative crowd. Gordy provided a unique brand of stand-up musical comedy that sprinkled comedy, classical guitar, favored oldies and original songs. The show was not all comedy as a great deal was dedicated to wonderful music from the classically trained guitarist. It is hoped that OPERA will have another opportunity to book Gordy Pratt for a return engagement.

BUILDING PROGRESS

As in the past several years, much voluntary labor was spent this year on the Opera House. The grand staircase, lobby area and stage area were all painted by Stewart Ruenz who also did some repair work to patch up places where plaster had fallen away. Work on stabilizing the remaining part of the balcony has been directed by Tom Rude with assistance from Larry Davis.

Some upgraded electrical work was done in the auditorium. Previously, it was necessary to drop a cord out a second story window in

order to plug in to an outlet to run the lights needed for our plays and musical events. Our thanks to Montana Dakota Utilities for providing grant money to help with this cost and to Chad's Electric.

Last year, we converted the room at the top of the stairs into our costume and prop room. However, this year we were offered costumes and props from Trinity Bible College's now defunct theatre department. We took TBC up on their offer which meant we had to move our costume and prop department into the rooms on the south side of the second floor to accommodate our increased inventory. Thanks to Linda Wedell's hard work, along with others, we now have a tremendous resource for our productions.

The room adjacent to the Lobby & Gallery area of the former Randall Store was cleaned up and reorganized thanks primarily to the efforts of John Boekelheide. It is hoped that funds will be found to convert this area into a space suitable for leasing out to a business.

The former Coleman Clothing section has seen a great deal of work during 2012 and a grant from the ND State Historical Society has been secured to help replace the floor joists in this section of the building which will take place in 2013.

We also got a grant from the ND Community Foundation which, along with donor money, was used to update our architectural plans for renovation of the Opera House. This will assist our process of seeking charitable foundation funds and other grant money for our construction projects.

APPRECIATION

OPERA, Inc. would like to thank and recognize those who donated to our organization over the past year. What we have accomplished is as a result of the support that we have received. Our apologies to anyone who donated and your name was accidentally omitted. Donations to OPERA, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization are tax deductible. Contributions, no matter how large or

small, can be mailed to: OPERA, Inc., PO Box 334, Ellendale ND 58436-0334.

Jane Ahlin
Alpha Circle
Arlan & Carol Andersen
Laura Lee Barry
Bickey Bender
Sharron Brady
Bobbi Jo Burow
Elizabeth Coleman
Bernard & Claudette Colestock
John & Linda Crabtree
Harry & Louise Claeys
Dakota Valley Electric
Tom & Mary Denison
Dickey County Abstract
Deb & Gene Elhard
Ellendale Chamber of Commerce
Ellendale Pharmacy
Mary Ewing
Greg Gackle
Joyce Gebhardt
Tom Isern
June & Larry Jantze
Jody & Dennis Ketterling
Nancy Klipfel
Betty Kosel
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Tom & Lori Mattheis
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Jeff & Vicky Roehl
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Marie Smith
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Tim Steinwand

Bob & Gwen Tatum
Tom & Sandy Ulmer
John Wheelihan
John Wheelihan II
Whitestone Battlefield Historical Society
Scott & Lori Young
James & Eileen Zimmerman

We also received several anonymous donations and thank those donors as well.

CHRISTMAS COMEDY & CAROLS

OPERA, Inc. celebrated the Christmas season at the Opera House by putting on an evening of entertainment dubbed, "Christmas Comedy & Carols" on Saturday, December 15, before a very appreciative crowd. Comedy opened the show with a TV reporter (Jenny Nolan) interviewing Santa Claus (Grant Crabtree) from whom it was disclosed, among other things, that St. Nick's business operations have been modernized including robotic reindeer, delivery via FedEx and a move from the North Pole to escape escalating operating costs. Talk about moving the date of Christmas (to get away from football season) and combining it with Valentine's Day and perhaps President's Day was also revealed. Despite all these drastic changes, Santa left the viewers with a hearty Christmas greeting.

Aleena Morgan then graced the stage performing two Christmas Carols. She then gave way to her two young sons, Jayce and Kason who gave a rendition of "Jingle Bells."

The next bit of comedy featured a spoof of the old TV series "Dragnet" where Detective Joe Wednesday (Grant Crabtree) and his partner, Frank Jones (Dave Dorpinghaus) are working on Christmas Eve when the call comes in on a 409625-096479 – someone not believing in Santa Claus. The offender, a man named Grudge (Dick Young), further reveals that he doesn't believe in the Easter Bunny either. Or Columbus. Or Cleveland or Cincinnati (He's not sure about Toledo). Wednesday sets out to prove there really is a Santa Claus, but Grudge won't budge. Finally, he's taken to the North Pole where

they meet a Brownie (Michelle Langley) from the South Pole who has been hired by Santa due to a shortage of elves. She points out that they have a big pile of presents that have been stacking up for a guy who would get them if only he believed in Santa Claus. She reveals that the guy's name is Grudge. As Wednesday and Grudge begin to leave, Grudge has a change of heart and becomes a Santa Claus believer. And Columbus, Cleveland, Cincinnati and the Easter Bunny (He's still not sure about Toledo).

More music was enjoyed as Jolene Maunu regaled the crowd with three songs of the season accompanied by Sharon Langley on the grand piano.

The final comedy sketch told the tale of erstwhile bank robber, Buddy (Grant Crabtree), who has the Christmas blues and decides to call his sister, Bunny (Jenny Nolan) just prior to robbing a bank in Salt Lake City. Buddy discovers that their Momma (Brenda Rekow) recently had her eyeball pop out (on account her crying because she hadn't heard from Buddy and the tears were oily from all the mayonnaise). Buddy, filled with frustration and guilt, proceeds with his bank job, but the very friendly, but somewhat dim Teller (Dave Dorpinghaus) trips the alarm and Buddy has to flee. Buddy then relates his rough childhood to the audience and how hard Momma worked to make Christmas nice for the kids. Then he decides to go all out by hiring a caterer, a decorator, a string quartet, a troupe of performing cats and a stand-up comedian - all for Momma for Christmas. When Momma and Bunny arrive Christmas Eve, we discover that Momma has now gone blind. Momma doesn't want to be a burden on anyone, so she brings her own turkey sandwich for dinner along with her own cranberry sauce and her own toilet paper. She also tells Buddy that since she's blind, they might as well turn off the lights and save money while she can read her book. She's blind, but she's read the book before and knows how it goes. Momma then hears music from the string quartet and thinks it's a record. When Buddy tells her it's an actual string quartet, Momma is not impressed. Buddy

then motions for the comedian to begin. Momma wants to know if this is something on TV and when told it's an actual comedian, again she shows no excitement. Suddenly, there is a knock on the door and it's Agent Grudge (Dick Young) from the FBI letting Buddy know he's on his trail. Buddy's big Christmas for Momma is a big dud. The day after Christmas, Buddy decides to do another bank job, this one in New York where he encounters a brash Teller (Sharon Langley) who badgers and belittles Buddy sending him off empty handed. Buddy then decides to go see a psychologist (Jolene Maunu) who, breaking into song, tells him to be happy, you have to do things that make you happy and you have to do them yourself. He takes that advice and for the next Christmas, it is just Buddy and Momma just enjoying their sandwiches and reading their books side by side.

IN MEMORIAM

Tragedy struck the OPERA family this year with the sudden passing of Stewart Ruenz in June. The number of hours Stewart spent on the Opera House over the years is nearly incalculable. His legacy can most notably be seen in the construction of the Lobby & Gallery area and "Stu's Kitchen", but there are the unseen things - the soups made for the annual Soup Kitchen, grilling brats and burgers, working in the "soup coupe" (not to mention converting the vehicle for that use), overseeing all aspects of construction and renovation and so much, much more. But, we will most miss the man himself. A gentle giant, a true gentleman and a great friend.

A special memorial fund in Stewart's name has established at Starion Financial in Ellendale with funds to be used toward development of the section of the Opera House building west of the Lobby & Gallery.

DONOR RECOGNITION PROGRAM

OPERA, Inc. has an ongoing recognition program whereby donors are listed in the Opera House Lobby & Gallery as well as in our newsletters, theatre production programs and other OPERA materials. Contributions accumulate, meaning that all donations from when this program was begun in 2001 are added together to place donors in one of our five categories. Donors move up into different categories once they meet the minimum amount required. Here is our current list:

Supporting Players

(\$1,000 - \$2,499)

Anonymous
John Boekelheide
Dorothy Mouw Brown
Marilyn Burow
H. Preston & Robert W Coleman Family
J.D. & Esther Crabtree
Dakota Valley Electric
Mary Jane Davidson
Ellendale Pharmacy
Mary Ewing
Amy Hartman
Jay & Pat Kendall
Ken & Betty Kosel
Glenn Mastel
Duane & Beverly Mattheis
Brad & Kari Nishek
North Dakota Community Foundation
Karl Rekow
Pete Retzlaff
Starion Financial
Orpha Steinwand

Leading Players

(\$2,500 - \$4,999)

American Legion Post #137
Anonymous
Grant Crabtree
Tom & Mary Denison
Deb & Gene Elhard
Ellendale Gaming Association
Patricia Ingraham
Montana Dakota Utilities Co.
Preservation North Dakota
Jeanette Ruenz
Stewart Ruenz
Lana & Warren Schlecht

Directors

(\$5,000 - \$9,000)

Ellendale Area Foundation

A.J. Wedell

Clara & John Wheelihan

Jim & Eileen Zimmerman

Producers

(\$10,000 - \$19,999)

Greg & Judy Gackle

Ned Leiby

ND State Historical Society

Angels

(\$20,000 & Above)