

Return to past marks LHU Players' 50th year

They're theater people turned archaeologists.
Or so it would seem.

Celebrating their 50th anniversary, the Lock Haven University theater College Players have dedicated recent weeks to tracing their roots, said John B. Gordon, chairman of the speech communication and theater department.

Along with two student workers, Gordon set out to compile a history of the university's first 50 years of major plays, one-act plays and children's theater performances.

The search was awesome, the task cumbersome. The information, though, invaluable.

The three went about the mission with direction as one of the student's, Amy Richert, a biological sciences major from Lock Haven, has worked as a professional archaeologist and holds such a degree from California University of Pennsylvania.

While piles of old programs and clippings made stalagmite-like pillars in seldom-visited storage rooms, the group soon realized the immensity of the project.

Since 1936, photographs and ads for the

Players' productions had gathered, but in no common order.

As word of the search went out, others — faculty members, alumni and friends — brought in theatre artifacts.

It was, it seemed, the theater find of the century for Lock Haven.

The first step — the dig — completed, the three including Gordon, Lisbeth Olstead and Richert initiated the "analysis" stage of the project.

Continuing in their probe, the group stratified their findings by year and proceeded to catalog the materials.

The result?
Comprehensive theater archives now exist with volume one including information on 96 major productions with lists of cast members, advertisements, and photographs.

The first production recorded was the romantic comedy, "You and I," thus marking the beginning of the University College Players.

The second volume includes one-act plays and children's theater productions, the first of which was "The Valiant" performed by the Chi Kappa Sigma Debs. Newspaper

articles following the production indicate the children's theater was a huge success, Gordon said. The children's theater program is no longer funded and does not exist.

The final children's production, "Indian Captive," concluded on May 8, 1981, in the university's Sloan Theatre.

The research depicted theater as a major part of the academic scene in the 1930s and 1940s. It was not at all unusual to find gossip columnists printing tidbits on the actors and their performances and it was a real honor to participate in one of the year's major productions.

LHU theatre students 'dig' play history

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Amy Richert, a biological sciences major from Lock Haven, directed the "mission." Miss Richert has worked as a professional archaeologist and holds such a degree from California University of Pennsylvania.

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Gordon and his associates will use the information pooled in the "dig" to make for an exciting 1987-88 entertainment-in-theatre year.

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the project. Since 1936, photographs and ads for the Players' productions had gathered, and gathered, but in no common order--in no manner discernible to the expedition team.

As word of the search went out, others--faculty members, alumni and friends--too brought in their own theatre artifacts.

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University Star Search To Reunite Theatre Players And Enthusiasts

LOCK HAVEN-- The Lock Haven University College Players will introduce their second 50 years of performing excellence with the production of Arthur Miller's "The Crucible."

The play, under the direction of Chairman of the Speech Communication and Theatre Department John B. Gordon, will be performed during three shows, November 19-21.

Gordon, having recently completed a research project to catalog the University's first 50 years in theatre, is now trying to locate all of those cast members who had roles in the institution's premier production, "You and I."

According to Gordon, many of the cast members from the 1936 production now live outside of Pennsylvania. But, he adds, the incentive of rekindling those old memories and moments on stage will help bring them back to Lock Haven for the November event.

Beyond the "You and I" cast, the University is extending an invitation to all alumni who have taken part in theatre productions over the years, Gordon said.

The idea is to spark the same type of interest in the theatre as was common to productions staged in the 1930s and 1940s, according to Gordon.

"We hope to celebrate the next half-century with crowded theatre performances, hundreds of news articles and advertisements, dozens of volunteer cast and crew members and, again, dances and banquets reminiscent of the early days."

As part of the reunion season, Gordon has offered to open the theatre archives for alumni and friends who, too, are searching for stage associates.

Alumni and friends are encouraged to offer their expertise in building the archives by forwarding additional news articles, photographs, programs or other items relating to the University theatre.

For more information on the Lock Haven University theatre archives or on the theatre reunion now being coordinated, contact Gordon at (717) 893-2131.

Interested parties may also write Gordon at Lock Haven University, Lock Haven, Pennsylvania. The zip code is 17745.



Theatre enthusiasts at Lock Haven University included (from left): Lisbeth Olstead, Dushore, Amy Richert, Lock Haven, and John B. Gordon, of the university's Speech and Theatre Department.