

Happy Holidays from the Kirk Players

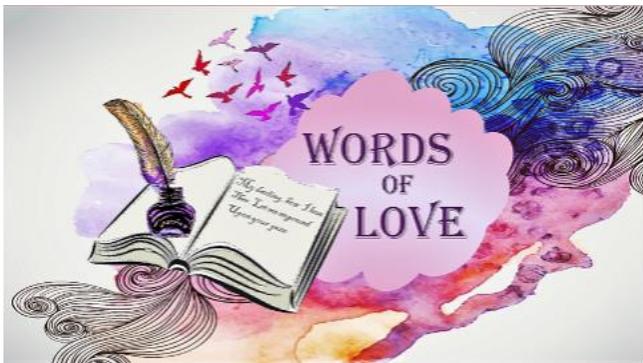
SPOTLIGHT Winter 2020

Our 55th Season will be Virtual

For the safety of our audiences and our cast and crew, the Kirk Players have decided to remain virtual for the remainder of our 55th season. We have been working hard to find quality shows that will entertain our audiences while providing opportunity for our directors, performers and crew members. We have had success to date with our recent *Evening of Mystery* and *Tidings and Traditions* performances.

We are now pleased to announce the remainder of our 55th Season.

Words of Love



Jon Leslie Lynn will be directing *Words of Love*, a performance of Shakespeare love sonnets and other romantic poetry on Saturday, February 13 for Valentine's Day.

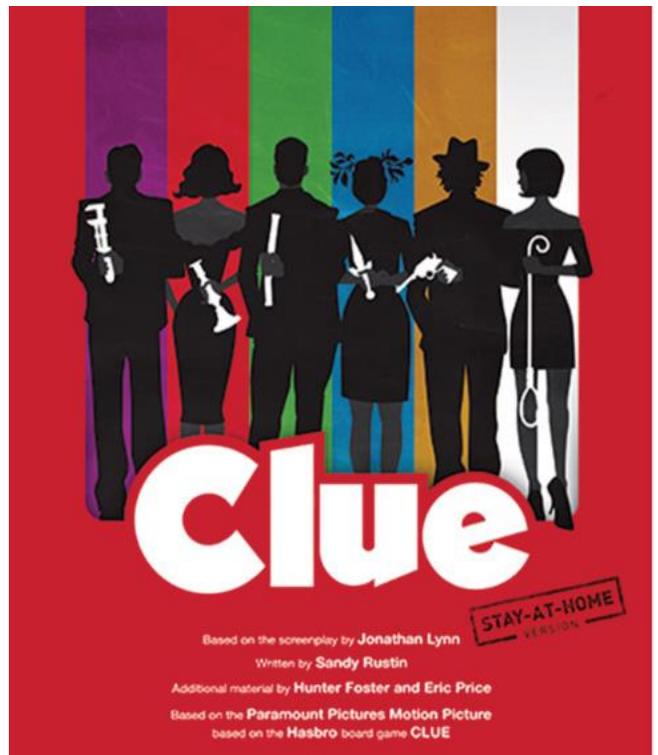
Auditions will be on Monday, January 4th and Wednesday, January 6th. Time slots will be scheduled after receiving your audition form. Audition information can be found on our Website: [KP Audition Form](#).

We welcome members and non-members to join our cast and crew. We have an opening for Video Tech Director (training can be provided).

Cinderella Wore Combat Boots

Patrick Blake will be directing a very fun short children's show called *Cinderella Wore Combat Boots* (adaptation by Jerry Chase) along with other short pieces on Saturday, March 20, 2021. Auditions will be the week of February 15, 2021. The cast will be all youth actors.

Clue (Stay-at-home Version)



Peter Grassl will be directing *Clue (Stay-at-home Version)*, premiering on Saturday, May 22, 2021. Auditions will be the week of March 22, 2021.

As you can see, we are keeping busy and look forward to all our Kirk Players performing in or serving as crew members for these shows. We will need everyone to get involved!

More information to come!!!

Words of Love
February 13, 2021

Cinderella Wore Combat Boots
March 20, 2021

Clue (Stay-at-home)
May 22, 2021



New Year's Eve Celebration

Put the bubbly on ice, snuggle next to the fire, and get ready to share time with your Kirk Player Family and say, "Good riddance to 2020!!!"



The Hospitality Committee (after doing a spectacular job at our December membership meeting with Holiday Bingo) is proud to sponsor our virtual New Year's Eve celebration on Thursday, December 31 from 8PM to 10PM. There will be games, prizes and plenty of fun. Game details and Zoom invite are forthcoming.

Upcoming Workshops

Jessica Rattanasena will be facilitating a Virtual Tech Elements workshop on Thursday, January 7, from 7-8:30 p.m. Please e-mail Gretchen at artisticdirectorgg@gmail.com if you are interested in participating. We already have 15 people registered!



Sometime in 2021 we are also planning a "How to make the most of your audition" workshop with Jon Leslie Lynn. Stay tuned for more information soon.

Tidings and Traditions

It all began last fall when we were planning December shows and Les suggested *The Gift of the Magi*. I adore the story in all of its many versions and fell in love with the idea.

After we made the decision to cancel our winter children's show, I kept thinking that we should try to do a short holiday show if we could pull it together. Seven rehearsals and one night of recording later, we premiered our virtual recording of [The Gift of the Magi](#).

Although there are many people to thank, there is truly no way we could have done this without Jessica Rattanasena. Her skills at actor placement, creative ideas, wonderful Zoom tech skills and editing skills made it a hugely valuable learning experience. The brilliant, and incredibly helpful Jeanna Daebelliehn was a joy to work with. She has such a great eye and I felt very fortunate to have her by my side and for her fun turn as Madame Sofronie. Fran Hansen is without a doubt the best prop mistress that I have ever worked with, as all Kirk Players know. Her attention to detail, energy and creativity are unmatched. Susie Hill was kind enough to give up her time matching up blouses, skirts and jackets with amazing ability, digging out the perfect hat from a box that was buried under clothes.

And my wonderful cast, who were so willing to take this leap and pull this show together. I looked forward to every rehearsal, catching up with all and laughing about silly things. Patrick Blake is the consummate team player, and I was thrilled to have his voice as our narrator. Mandy Stebbins truly embodied our sweet young wife, Della and Nat Brautigam gave a lovely, honest performance as Jim.

The star on top of the tree, if you will, was the participation of 30 Kirk Players and their partners and families in a reading of "[A Visit from St. Nicholas](#)" or "Twas the Night Before Christmas". Meghan Lane conceived of the idea and our amazing, talented members took it from there. And the ever hard-working, patient Jessica Rattanasena recorded and edited the performance.

It was a very special little show, and we were able to share a bit of holiday spirit with our viewers during this very different holiday season.

After all, it's all about love!

Peace,

Gretchen



Patrick Blake, Virtual Director

Interview by Doris Nagel, Video by Martin Hill

Patrick Blake has been a member of the Kirk Players for over 27 years. He has played a number of roles on stage and behind the scenes and has contributed in many, many ways to our organization. In October, Patrick became our first virtual director when he directed *An Evening of Mystery*. Doris Nagel had the opportunity to sit down with Patrick recently to discuss his experience.



Please click this link for their 8-minute interview: [Patrick Interview](#)

Fran Hansen Props Mistress Extraordinaire

by Lisa Soare

Fran Hansen first encountered the Kirk Players in 1998 as a member of the audience, when she and her family were invited by member Scott Hanks to see *The Clown Prince of Wanderlust* and then to see him perform in *Exit the Body*. She was delighted by the Kirk Players but couldn't commit the necessary time until she retired from teaching in 1999. Fran joined the summer workshop that same year and was hooked. In 2000, John W. Lynn invited Fran to become a Kirk Player, and she's been an integral part of the troupe ever since.

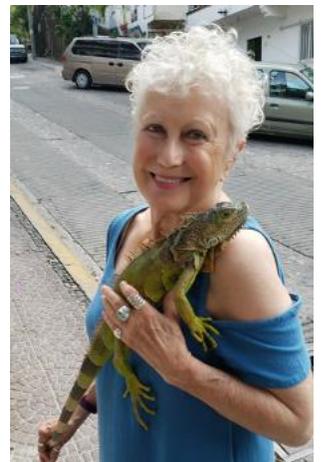
Fran has appeared on stage nine times, but she spends most of her time behind the curtain as KP's props guru. Whether it's a serving dish for a WWI murder mystery, a handbag for a 1960s comedy of manners, or a cane with a gold-laced handle for a Victorian period drama, Fran can find it. Directors and actors know they can rely on her to provide realistic, historically accurate, and often beautiful props to work with.

"I apprenticed on props with *Little Old Ladies in Tennis Shoes* and *Romantic Comedy*, and I have worked on simple as well as complicated and difficult prop shows," Fran says.

Fran Hansen (cont'd)

"Assisting with *Rumors* was probably the most fun. The show called for a duck, which I dutifully baked, removed the meat for the dinner on stage, and cleaned the carcass for its role. It was frozen every night, and the cast complained as it began to ripen at each performance at Cuneo. We used two ducks for the 4-weekend show.

"I'm a detailed person trying to be exact, which makes props a perfect fit. Designing newspapers for shows became my specialty." Fran's knowledge and attention to detail has brought countless shows to life for audiences through the years.



Theatre has been a part of Fran's life for a long time. She majored in drama in college and was involved in the Beverly Theater Guild on Chicago's far south side. She directed plays at The Fourth Presbyterian Church in downtown Chicago; the group performed *Robin Hood*, which she wrote with some friends for the church's meeting hall. She wrote children's plays for Vacation Bible School and directed Lenten series for Wednesday nights at Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit in Lincolnshire.

Of Fran's many shows with the Kirk Players, a few stand out for her. "I loved being part of *The Cemetery Club* with Pat Kichinko and Bobbi LaBelle in 2002. The three of us had a lot of fun, and I felt like I became one of the players," she says.

"KP is my theater family, and I love being a contributing part. I appreciate how involved KP is in supporting the community, donating its profits. The John Lynn Scholarship for graduating high school students as they prepare to study in the performing arts is wonderful, the community's support as advertisers shows that Community Arts is important."

Kirk Player Holiday Memories and Traditions

Barb

When my kids were five and seven, I didn't put their presents under the tree, I hid them. They were everywhere; in the freezer, under my bed, in my closet... One year, I wondered why Matt had four more gifts than Lauren. I finally found them! They asked me to please not hide their gifts anymore. They were teenagers already!

Brenda

My sister and I were just reminiscing about the time we were awake on Christmas morning before Mom! Mom had been up very late, as usual, wrapping presents and putting toys together. We were probably 'tweens at the time, and we sat by the sofa where mom was sleeping, giggling quietly and waiting for her to wake up. She woke up shortly and we were so excited to be up first - to which she responded, "Yes, now go back to bed. It's too early." We only needed to do that one time. We never tried to get up that early again. We did, however, stay up late with mom for many years wrapping gifts and setting out the toys for our younger sisters, all while watching the annual showing of "Scrooge" with Alistair Sim on PBS.

Bev

We play a party game called "The Biggest Loser"!! Our 8 adult children play- each draw 3 envelopes from a box. Each envelope they draw could have a penny, nickel, dime, quarter, dollar, \$20, \$50. Each one keeps the money in their envelopes. The one who ends up with the least amount of total money in their 3 envelopes becomes the "Biggest Loser"! Guess what- The "Biggest Loser" then wins the jackpot of a \$100 in cash! Here is a picture of Ken holding the \$100 on his forehead! 😄



Vicki

I have many special memories of looking at the Christmas windows of the State Street stores and eating lunch under the big tree in the Walnut Room of Marshall Fields. One of my favorite gifts from Santa was a Mary Poppins doll--complete with a carpet bag and umbrella!

Marilee

My parents took my sister and I to spend one winter break in our ski chalet in Bessemer, Michigan. We cut down our own Christmas tree from our backyard and dressed it in psychedelic ornaments and lights from the 1970s. On Christmas Eve we went on an open-sleigh ride with two Clydesdale horses, named Bud and Busch, pulling the sled! The bells on their harness jingled the entire time as we slipped through the quiet streets and fields while my sister and I sang Christmas carols at the top of our lungs and drank hot chocolate as it snowed.

Peter

We have many Grassl family traditions. My dad wearing the Christmas tie I bought him for 25 years straight. Giving my mom a pug puppy calendar and snack basket every year. Gretchen's snow globe collection almost doubling in size with a broad array of holiday globes. As far as fond memories, we recall our son Dylan's first encounter with Santa - not quite sure he trusts this jolly soul. And of course, our Westie "Ed" who was part of every family celebration for many years.



Gretchen

I am the youngest of seven children, so my sister who was three years older and I always went around to all of my siblings and our parents to wake them up at like 5:30 a.m. to open gifts. Just when we thought we got someone up successfully, they would go back to bed. But we pressed on until they all grudgingly got up and then we looked down at the tree in our foyer and there were so many presents that you could barely walk. So fun!

Jessica R.

Every year my best friend and I would have both Thanksgiving and Christmas together. We would start cooking at 10 am with our tradition of drinking mimosas. Just one year, I ended up drinking too many and I feel asleep and slept through Christmas dinner! Let just say we now limit ourselves to only two bottles of Champagne!



What's News with You?

Much celebration is happening at the **Motyka** household. Happy Birthday to **Kelsey** who turned 13 on December 17. **Jack** will be 5 on January 13. **Brian**'s birthday is just around the corner on February 28. And some very exciting news - **Kelsey** was selected to be the designer of a new wall mural at her school!

Welcome back former Kirk Members **Chris** and **Sue Markgraf**. The Markgraf's were members until 2009 and were in several productions including *The Wizard of Oz*, *Noises Off*, *Deathtrap*, *Dracula*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *Don't Dress for Dinner*.

Franny Pollack's son Scott is in a funny YouTube video tasting sauces at Buffalo Wild Wings.



Congrats to Kirk player and guest players who participated in *A Musical Christmas Carol*. Replay available at: <https://youtu.be/Y-YdQ1QE74Q>

KP Members in this production include:
Marilee C.C. Rusiniak - Mrs. Cratchit
Patrick Blake - Old Joe

KP Guest Performers in this production include:
Adapted and Directed by Terry O'Brien (Narrator)
John Haderlein (Producer/KP Sponsor) - Chesterton
Monica Stark - Char Woman
Lexi Hazen – Asst. Producer / Asst. Director (Belle)

Mandy, Martin, Doris and Jessica R. have joined our Social Media group to partner with **Meghan** and the PR team to support messaging through FaceBook, YouTube, Instagram, and our Website.

The Strategic Planning Committee (**Betty, Lisa S, Jon M, Jeff H, Jessica R, Mike L and Gretchen**) have been meeting every other week to explore ways to strengthen our organization's future through **Production, Membership Development, Sales & Marketing, Community Relations** and **Financial Longevity** planning. The results of those meetings will be shared at a special meeting in February.

PR has been conducting a series of **Sponsor Spotlights** on Facebook to help promote our sponsors during this time – don't forget to patronize them whenever you can. We plan to extend their ads into next season for free.

Jessica Rattanasena is in a film called *The Lao Redemption*, tentatively, set to release on Amazon Prime late January 2021. Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OMxJbesoLk>

The US government allocated 90 million dollars to Laos to remove unexploded bombs. This drama fiction movie explores a fictional scenario how this was done. Seven Laotian CIA agents go undercover to retrieve documents that reveal who was responsible for the excessive bombings in Laos during the Vietnam War.





Kirk Players Calendar

NYE Virtual Party	December 31 (Thu) 8:00 pm – 10:00 pm	Zoom
Technical Directing (video) Workshop	January 7 (Thu) at 7:00 pm	Zoom
Monthly Membership Meeting	January 8 (Fri) at 7:00 pm	Zoom
Monthly Membership Meeting	February 5 (Fri) at 7:00 pm	Zoom
Monthly Membership Meeting	March 12 (Fri) at 7:00 pm	Zoom
Monthly Membership Meeting	April 9 (Fri) at 7:00 pm	Zoom
<i>Words of Love</i> - Auditions	January 4 (Mon) and 6 (Wed) 7:00 pm (by appt.)	Zoom
<i>Words of Love</i> - Performance	February 13 (Sat) at 7:00 pm	YouTube
<i>Cinderella Wore Combat Boots</i> - Auditions	February 15 (Mon) and 17 (Wed) 7 pm (by appt.)	Zoom
<i>Cinderella Wore Combat Boots</i> - Performance	March 20 (Sat) at 7:00 pm	YouTube
<i>Clue (Stay-at-home Version)</i> - Auditions	March 22 (Mon) and 24 (Wed) 7 pm (by appt.)	Zoom
<i>Clue (Stay-at-home Version)</i> - Performance	May 22 (Sat) at 7:00 pm	YouTube



...and Belated Birthdays!

Jeanna Daebelliehn – Oct 31
 Mike Stebbins – November 23
 Lisa Soare – December 12
 Martin Hill – December 28
 Gretchen Grassl – January 2
 Jon “Les” Lynn – January 18

Kat Basso – January 25
 Barb Selvaggio – January 29
 Lisa Willems – February 12
 Meghan Lane – February 16
 Peter Grassl – February 27
 Brian Motyka – February 28

Susie Hill – March 4
 Dom Basso – March 12
 Anna Lieberman – March 17
 Chris Markoff – March 17
 Bev Karns – March 26
 Betty Slack – March 30

Membership Anniversaries (Oct'20 – Mar'21)

20+ Years	Building Momentum
Jon Matousek – 1/15/92 (29 years)	Bev Karnes – 11/7/12 (8 years)
10+ Years	Meghan Lane – 11/7/12 (8 years)
Dom Basso – 11/29/06 (14 years)	Susie Hill – 3/1/13 (8 years)
Kat Basso – 11/29/06 (14 years)	Martin Hill – 3/1/13 (8 years)
Jess Motyka – 10/22/10 (10 years)	Mike Stebbins – 3/1/13 (8 years)
Lisa Soare – 3/1/11 (10 years)	Amy Sharer – 2/6/15 (6 years)
Gretchen Grassl – 3/1/11 (10 years)	Lisa Willems – 2/27/17 (4 years)
Peter Grassl – 3/1/11 (10 years)	

Kirk Players Mission Statement

We are a nonprofit organization whose mission is to enrich, educate and entertain our community by providing a superior theatre experience, to give back to our community with an emphasis on the arts, and to create a safe and inclusive environment.

Guiding Principles

- Integrity and Fairness
- Diversity and Inclusivity
- Collaboration, Teamwork and Participation
- Quality and Excellence
- Spirit and Passion toward the Mission

Spotlight is Brought to You by...

Editor-in-Chief: Peter Grassl
 Writers: Gretchen Grassl, Lisa Soare, Doris Nagel, and all of our member contributors
 Video: Martin Hill
 Copy Editing: Gretchen Grassl
 Membership Research: Randy Rice
 Distribution: Jessica Motyka

Vision Statement

Our organization strives to:

- Provide an engaging and memorable theatrical experience to a broad and diverse audience
- Cultivate an environment where people who are passionate about the performing arts can grow and thrive
- Serve as a valued cultural asset through our work and service to the community

Stay Connected

Visit our Members-only FaceBook Page, and our [Kirk Players Members-only Webpage](#)

- Login: info@kirkplayers.org
- Password: Kirk1966

The Kirk Players Board of Directors

Randy Rice, President / Membership Director
 Marilee C.C. Rusiniak, Vice President / Sales Director
 Gretchen Grassl, Artistic Director
 Peter Grassl, Communications Director
 Susie Hill, Financial Director
 Meghan Lane, Public Relations Director
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