

KIRK PLAYERS SPOTLIGHT

Welcome and Thank You! New and Retiring Kirk Player Board Members

This year we welcome a new Artistic Director (Gretchen Grassl), Public Relations Director (Meghan Lane) and Administrative Director (Kat Basso) while saying thank you for your incredible service and enriching our legacy to our former Artistic Director (Jon Leslie Lynn) and Public Relations Director (Jon Matousek).



Artistic Director
Jon Leslie Lynn
Thank you!



Artistic Director
Gretchen Grassl
Welcome!



PR Director
Jon Matousek
Thank you!



PR Director
Meghan Lane
Welcome!



Admin. Director
Kat Basso
Welcome!

Former Artistic Director – Jon Leslie Lynn

See next page for our recent interview with Les.

Former Public Relations Director – Jon Matousek

I am happy to share reflections on my past 14 years on the Kirk Player Board of Directors. Truly it has been an honor and joy to serve in the PR director role for so long and to work with such talented and dedicated folks. Certainly, we have had our ups and downs and we will continue to have them as we grow and learn.

Recently, while working the box office, I was reminded once again how valued our “brand” is and what it meant to at least one of our patrons.

A man and his wife, both seniors, appeared and wanted to pay by cash but they were about \$5 short. I asked if they had a credit card or check, and they said “no.” Patrick our box office captain and said to let them go in anyway. And we did.

The next patron was a woman who paid for her ticket and also flipped us a \$5 bill and said, “I want to cover the couple who just went in.” I said, “Oh no madame, that isn’t necessary.” She replied, “No, I insist! I know what you people do for the community! I know what Kirk Players stands for.” With that she smiled and went on her way into the auditorium. That day a small favor put a spotlight on a grand cause!

It wasn’t a huge incident, but it did remind me of the impact we have on our community as an organization. We must continue to work hard and passionately to create wonderful theatre, but never lose sight of our cause---to serve and enrich the community through the arts.

Artistic Director – Gretchen Grassl

I have enjoyed the last 4 years as Administrative Director, being part of the Board with such intelligent and passionate people. In taking on the role of Artistic Director, I have a lot of personal goals, but mostly I just want to help the organization to keep doing great work and keep learning.

Paddy Lynn and Jon Leslie Lynn were great mentors and I thank them both for their kindness and friendship. We have so many people who are talented in many ways and a very strong legacy and mission, I feel very excited to see where the future takes us!

Public Relations Director – Meghan Lane

I’m excited and nervous to be a new member of the Board! Excited because I have ideas to share and hopefully implement to grow our wonderful organization. And nervous about having the time to do all the things! Jon Matousek will be impossible to replace, but I will try to live up to my predecessor’s example. My first and foremost efforts will be to represent all of the Members of Kirk Players in a manner where all are heard and respected and to maintain our mission to the community.

Administrative Director – Kat Basso

I am excited about this opportunity. I truly believe I am ready to rock this role and it is definitely time for me to put myself onto the board to learn, grow and give voice and support to the Kirk Players. I have always been a vocal advocate for KP and have always represented the organization in the best way I know how. It is time for me to give back to KP as they have given so much to me. I take this position seriously and with honor; I am proud to represent all of you.



A Brief History of the Kirk Players Interview with Jon Leslie Lynn

Could you share a brief history of the Kirk Players and our Board of Directors?

After moving to Mundelein (“Papa John” Lynn) started our theater group at the Kirk of the Lakes Church (hence the name “The Kirk Players”). He was collecting money for Vietnamese children with cleft palates. I started with him when I was only 12. I worked largely tech for first 10 years and had a few parts along the way. I did every high school play. One year, when I was 16, my dad said, “we don’t have enough directors for the summer workshop. I need you to start directing”. And I did.

In the beginning, my dad did everything. Hill Carter was his right-hand man. Laurie Sweeney was our business mind. My dad created the constitution that has withstood the test of time until just last year when we revised it. He was the only director for many years. Then we started breaking in some new directors.

In the earlier days, the Kirk players were primarily a group of families– at one point there were 11 Lynn’s, 7 Callahan’s. 4-5 Carters, the Slade’s and the O’Donnell’s. This was the core of the Kirk players. Hill and my sister Paula took turns winning the best actor award each year. I was married to Paddy in 1977 and moved away. We came back in 1979 and Paddy started working with us – everyone fell in love with her.

In the early days of the board, the board was more advisory. My dad made all the final decisions. There was a permanent tech director on the board and Hill Carter was second in command for many, many years. After Hill, we had Bob Thomas, a brilliant tech director, for several years before he moved. I was the third tech director in history and did it for many years. I have also been the membership director.

It is good to see some new blood coming up in the organization. We have people with real talent and experience (both on and off stage). Today we’re doing high-caliber theater.

Any parting thoughts about your role as Artistic director?

It’s lot of hard work but is very rewarding at the same time. Part of it is about artistic direction, part of it is working through various things behind the scenes. There are many fun times including giving out scholarships and awards. Probably the most enjoyable thing is seeing how the players are developing.

On a personal note, it’s very hard to step down. I am very focused on my family, and at the same time am very strong in the heart of the Kirk Players. I’ve been there since the beginning and have enjoyed many years with my dad, Paddy as Artistic Director, and all the players who have been part of the family.

Thoughts about Gretchen being the first non-Lynn to serve as Artistic Director in Kirk’s history

Gretchen was the only person in the organization who could have stepped into this role. Gretchen has been a strong contributor in play reading, running the Adult Summer Workshop, creating two special events, directing and acting in several productions, and has been awarded MVP multiple times.

What advice do you have for the new board?

It’s very important that they are objective. Leave personal feelings at the door. Decisions need to be made that are best for the group and best for our future. Sometimes you have to have tough conversations to ensure we stay strong in our mission and purpose.

Stay on the board for a while. It’s important that we have consistency, people who are going to be there a long time. You look at Jon Matousek who was there for 14 years – what he did with Publicity by developing a system and a deep group of contacts.

What is one of your fondest memories of when your dad was at the helm?

One of the things that stands out the most, he used to have almost the exact wording in green room every time. He wanted us to recognize that “Not everyone has these gifts, or the opportunity to do what we’re doing. Only by God’s blessing that we can do it. Never take these things for granted. And realize we’re bringing fun, laughter and entertainment to a group of people who really need it.”

We thank Jon, Paddy and the Lynn family for their years of service to our community and all of the lives that have been changed over the past 54 years because Papa John acted on his vision.



Committee Members – Thanks for all that you do!

Awards Committee

Chair: Artistic Director—Gretchen Grassl

Jeanna Daebelliehn	Anna Lieberman	Randy Margison
	Brian Motyka	

Communications

Chair: Communications Director—Marilee C.C. Rusiniak

Peter Grassl	Jeff Griffith	Sara Gunther
Martin Hill	Tracey Horn	Jessica Motyka
Betty Slack	Lisa Willems	

Hospitality Committee

Chair: Membership Director—Randy Rice

Jeanna Daebelliehn	Fran Hansen	Henry Hogan
Bev Karns	Barb Selvaggio	Lisa Soare

Membership Committee

Chair: Membership Director—Randy Rice

Jeff Harding	Tracey Horn	Randy Margison
Betty Slack	Lisa Soare	Mike Stebbins

Play Selection Committee

Chair: Artistic Director—Gretchen Grassl

Dominick Basso	Nathaniel Brautigam	Bev Karns
Jon (Les) Lynn	Amy Sharer	Mandy Stebbins
	Fred Vipond	

Properties & Facilities Committee

Chair: Financial Director—Susie Hill

Dominick Basso	Chuck Fitz-Hugh	Ron Otrembiak
Jessica Rattanasena	Amy Sharer	James Torbeck
	Fred Vipond	

Sales Committee

Chair: Sales Director—Brenda Sparks

Nathaniel Brautigam	Chuck Fitz-Hugh	Jeff Griffith
Mike Lieberman	Jon Matousek	Franny Pollack
Jessica Rattanasena		

Public Relations

Chair: Public Relations Director—Meghan Lane

Patrick Blake	Martin Hill	Mike Lieberman
Jon Matousek	Jessica Motyka	Franny Pollack
Barb Selvaggio	Mandy Stebbins	

Artistic Development

Chair: Artistic Director—Gretchen Grassl

Kat Basso	Patrick Blake	Peter Grassl
Jeff Harding	Anna Lieberman	Lisa Willems

Scholarship

Chair: Administrative Director - Kat Basso

Bev Karns	Jon (Les) Lynn	Barb Selvaggio
-----------	----------------	----------------

Annual Awards Banquet

Thanks to the Board, Randy Rice and his Hospitality Committee for producing a wonderful awards banquet in September of this year. This year we changed up the format a little and included special shout outs to all of those who contributed to our 53rd year productions.

Every person who contributed to our great mission and vision deserves celebration and recognition. Thank you all for your dedication and contributions. For this year, we are happy to announce the Leslie and Tech Award Winners.

Congratulations to Kat Basso on achieving her ACT award.

Brenda Sparks and Meghan Lane were honored for their work on the Kirk Players Constitution.

Best Supporting Actress – Kat Basso (Actor’s Nightmare)

Best Supporting Actor – Randy Rice (Black Comedy)

Carter Golden Hammer – Fred Vipond for set design on Black Comedy

Helen Award – Virginia Vipond

JJ Henderson “Behind the Curtain” – Running Crew (Red Herring): Brenda Sparks, Lisa Willems, Ari Cohen, Josh Hogan, Fred Vipond, Ron Otrembiak, Mike Lieberman, Jeff Griffith

Best Actress – Mandy Stebbins (Black Comedy)

Best Actor – James Torbeck (Actor’s Nightmare)

Hazen “Most Valuable Player” – Gretchen Grassl

Going forward, we are introducing a new “Unsung Hero” award for people in the shadows who make a difference in each of our productions starting with Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime. Cast and Crew – don’t forget to vote!



Lord Arthur Savile's Crime

I was blessed and lucky to have an incredible team for our recent production of Lord Arthur Savile's Crime. I am grateful for the management team who worked hard and played hard! I would not have been able to do this without them.

The cast was incredible. A talented and skilled team that brought this story to life with multi-faceted characters and engaging wit that had the audience enraptured for over two hours.

The crew: the lights, sound, set, running crews, props, costumes, special effects, all of which marveled the audience and the cast with exemplary flair and gifts. There is no play without each one of you all. You all were spectacular.

My eternal thanks for the exquisite set design, decoration and to those who lent extra hours to see that the stage was set and ready for our performances. Thanks to our house managers, the beautiful raffle basket, our popcorn producers and every volunteer helping with performances: I am humbled by your support. Thanks to all of you.

I am extremely proud of this production. It was a huge undertaking and I learned so much from every one of you. That's what keeps me coming back - the ability to grow and learn and continue to raise the bar. Thanks to one and all.

The Jungle Book

I'm very grateful to have the opportunity to direct the children's show next spring!

The Jungle Book by Joseph Robinette is a wonderful script of the parallel stories of Mowgli, the Indian boy raised by caring wolves and hunted by the evil Shere Kahn, and Rudyard Kipling, the emerging gifted writer who encounters a more civil version of jungle life in a British boarding school.

The script offers roles for a wide variety of the popular jungle animals—wolves, monkeys, the panther and bear, the elephant, vulture and snake and, even a jackal. In addition, there will be human roles that are just as challenging!

It will be an enjoyable challenge for Jen Tomlin, our assistant director, and myself to help the cast develop and deliver genuinely believable treatments of these jungle characters.

Our initial vision is to take the playwright's recommendations to heart and approach the production in a simple fashion allowing the exciting story to be told in colorfully vivid yet uncomplicated strokes.

That doesn't mean we won't take advantage of the boundless talent in our organization to help tease the audience's senses with unique costumes, creative makeup, wildly fun music and dance, imaginative special effects and other jungle-y surprises!

Mark your calendar now for auditions on Monday January 6 and Wednesday January 8!

Votes for Women Celebration

History was made on August 18, 1920 when the 19th Amendment was ratified, and women were granted the right to vote. But long before, long after and even now, women are fighting for rights, equality and social justice. And brave, intelligent men stood by their sides and spoke out for them. We honor the bravery, strength, creativity and loyalty of those that took a stand, in the face of socially shunned, arrested or worse.

Please come out with your family and friends and enjoy one or more of these performances. See professional storyteller Paddy Lynn embody Harriet Beecher Stowe, watch a one-act play about the British women's movement and see speakers share their journeys in current times.

There will be raffles, refreshments and giveaways, please come out and join us!

Preview Events (2020)

Fremont Library: Wed, January 22, 7-8:15 p.m.

Dunn Museum: Thu, January 23, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Del Webb Grand Dominion: Thu, Jan 30, 7-8:30

MAIN EVENT

Sunday, January 26, Regent Center (doors open at 1:30 – show begins at 2:00 PM)

This important and entertaining FREE event offers something for your whole family. We may even see a cameo by Theodore Roosevelt!



Favorite Theatre Quotes

Thanks to all who shared their favorite theatre quotes. We bent the rules a little and allowed movie quotes and personal quotes. Here we go...

Randy Margison: "Acting is a way to overcome your own inhibitions and shyness. The writer creates a strong, confident personality, and that's what you become - unfortunately, only for the moment." - Shirley Booth

Fred Vipond: My favorite quote comes from my high school acting teacher who said, "never turn your back on an audience." Although it can be interpreted in a number of ways, her point was this: they came to see you, you work for them. Know your lines and speak them clearly so that the person in the back row can understand you.

Barb Selvaggio: "Acting is behaving truthfully under imaginary circumstances" - Sanford Meisner

Meghan Lane: "The mission of the theatre, after all, is to change, to raise the consciousness of people to their human possibilities." Arthur Miller

Amy Sharer: "I'll have what she's having" – from *When Harry Met Sally*

Mandy Stebbins: "I love it when you go to see something, and you enter as an individual, and you leave as a group. Because you've all been bound together by the same experience." - Tom Hiddleston

Lisa Soare: "Theater is a series of insurmountable obstacles on the road to imminent disaster." - Tom Stoppard

Randy Margison: My favorite line of dialogue that I have ever spoken on stage. "My great aunt Jennifer ate a whole box of candy every day of her life. She lived to be a hundred and two, and when she had been dead for three days, she looked better than you do now."--Sheridan Whiteside in *The Man Who Came to Dinner*

Mike Lieberman: Quote from *Coconuts* (1929). (Margaret Dumont and Groucho Marx are dancing in each other's arms.)

Margaret Dumont: Closer. Closer!

Groucho: If I get any closer I'll be behind you.

Franny Pollack: "Each day may not be good. But there is something good in every day."

"Rats to Riches"

Since that day in Spring of 2015 when he auditioned for the Kirk Players Children's Show "Charlotte's Web" Nat Brautigam has become a vital member of the group, from his onstage performances, offstage work, summer workshop participation and strong work on committees.

Nat Brautigam shares, "I didn't know anything about the Kirk Players until I auditioned for Charlotte's Web. I was surprised I got cast as Templeton the Rat at my first audition here!" Prior to that audition, he had played the part of Jim in "Mother Hicks" at Elmhurst College his freshman year and had always had a desire to be on stage.

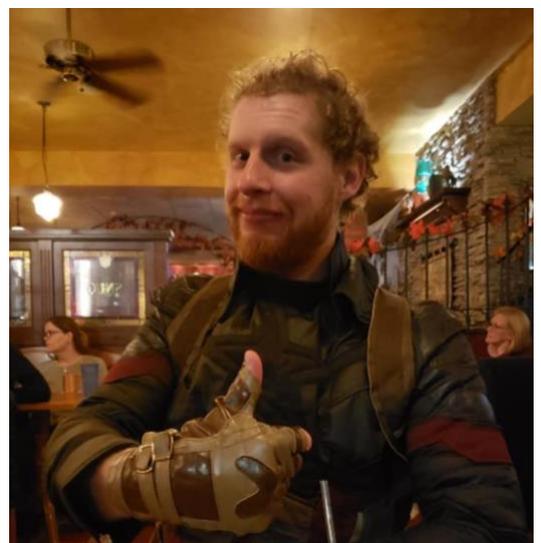
After his turn in "Charlotte", Nat worked Sound Crew for "The Uninvited", Co-Stage Managed "The Ladies Man", provided various voices for "It's A Wonderful Life Radio Play", played Dr. Johnson in "I Remember Mama", played Bobby Carlyle in "Postmortem", and Assistant Stage Managed "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe".

When the Kirk Players announced they were presenting "Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike" the following year, Nat was very interested in playing the hilarious role of the studly, dim-witted Spike. In order to be a viable candidate for the role, Nat lost 65 pounds (a move Christian Bale would have been proud of) before auditions. "I cut down on several junk foods and got a gym membership where I worked out nearly every day which definitely helped with the weight loss. And I still am doing all the same things and I have been able to keep the weight off!".

Nat's director confirmed he was a wonderful Spike! After "Vanya", Nat went on to play three leading roles, James in "Red Herring", Brindsley Miller in "Black Comedy" and this past fall played Lord Arthur in "Lord Arthur Saville's Crime". Next he will be assistant directing the one-act play "A Woman's Influence", part of a celebration in January of the anniversary of women's suffrage.

Nat sums up his feelings about Kirk Players and his hopes for the future. "I have seen that the people here really do care about each other and I like that. I would love to do more stage work and stretch my abilities, but I do also want to learn more about directing and other management roles."

We look forward to seeing Nat's work as a Kirk Player for many years to come!





What's News with You?

Mandy and Mike Stebbins welcome their daughter Lyla into the world on 9/25/19.



Kirk Players T-shirt travels to the Acropolis
c/o Mike and Anna Lieberman.

November

- The Anti-Depressants Improv will be at Lakeside Recreation Center on Saturday, November 16 at 7:30
- They were also invited to and will be performing at Second City Chicago on Friday, November 22 at 9:00
- Patrick Blake and Monica Stark will be in the musical Chess, at PML in November. It runs three weekends, Nov 8, Nov 15, Nov 22.

Membership Anniversaries

Jess Motyka – 10/22/10 (9 years)
 Dominick Basso – 11/29/06 (13 years)
 Kat Basso – 11/29/06 (13 years)
 James Torbeck – 11/29/11 (8 years)
 Beverly Karns – 11/7/12 (7 years)
 Meghan Lane – 11/7/12 (7 years)
 Jon Matousek – 1/15/92 (27 years)
 Sara Gunther – 1/31/96 (23 years)

Happy Birthday Kirk Members!

October

Jeanna Daebelliehn

November

Mike Stebbins

December

Lisa Soare

Martin Hill

January

Barbara Selvaggio

Gretchen Grassl

Jon Leslie Lynn

Kat Basso

Remember to send your birth date (year not required) to Randy Rice so we don't miss you in our Birthday wishes.

Kirk Players Calendar

Monthly Membership Meeting	November 8 (Fri) 7:00 PM	St. Andrew Church
Monthly Membership Meeting	December 13 (Fri) 7:00 PM	St. Andrew Church
Auditions for Jungle Book	January 6 (Mon) and 8 (Wed)	St. Andrew Church
Preview of <i>Votes for Women Celebration</i>	January 22 (Wed) 7-8:25 PM	Fremont Library
Preview of <i>Votes for Women Celebration</i>	January 23 (Thu) 6:30-7:30 PM	Dunn Museum
Preview of <i>Votes for Women Celebration</i>	January 30 (Thu) 7-8:30 PM	Del Webb Grand Dominion
<i>Votes for Women Celebration</i> Main Event	January 26 (Sun) 2-5:00 PM	Regent Center

Spotlight is brought to you by...

Editor-in-Chief: Peter Grassl
 Articles/Copy Editing: Gretchen Grassl
 Membership Research: Randy Rice
 Distribution: Jessica Motyka and Sara Gunther
 Communications Director: Marilee C.C. Rusiniak

Kirk Players Board of Directors

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