

St Luke's Players

Contributed by Dennis Kershaw, the late Kay Averill and Neville Owen

In 1949 a group under the leadership of Mrs. Flora ("Nicky") Nicholson began life as the Doncaster Players. The following year they accepted the invitation of Canon Pike, and moved up the road to St. Luke's Church Hall and became known as St. Luke's Players. They have been here ever since, putting on at least two plays every year, and in one year ten.

Some of the early members of the Players were also members of St. Luke's Church, including Captain ("Skipper") Gibson and Freda Gibson, Harry and Ivy Lukey, and Peter and Joan Key. Captain Gibson was awarded the prestigious Hamber Trophy for his contributions to amateur drama. Harry Lukey was president for fifteen years. Other members who joined St. Luke's Players in its early days included Margaret Martin, Evanne Murray, Blossom Johnston, Alec Hutchins, Cliff Clarke, Dorothy House, Margery Bridgman, Betty Jeanpierre and Clodagh Dowling. These are only a few among hundreds who have trodden the boards at St. Luke's.

From the earliest days the objective of the Players has been to produce (in words of Harry Lukey) "good, clean plays for your enjoyment". The very first production was "Our Hearts Are Young and Gay" by Cornelia Otis Skinner. Other well-known productions include "This Happy Breed", "See How they Run" (three times), "The Glass Menagerie", "Angel Street", "Murder at the Vicarage", and "An Ideal Husband". The old-fashioned "mellerdrama" was always a favourite with audiences, examples being two originals by the Players' own Betty Jeanpierre, "Curses, Foiled Again and Again" and "A Fate Worse Than Death", the latter being revived to celebrate our fortieth anniversary. In 1986 the Players presented at Government House a re-enactment of the presentation of the petition to found the B.C. Provincial Museum. In 2006 a pantomime, "Aladdin" was instituted, written and directed by Helena and Dave Hitchcock, and one has been performed every year since then. These have become extremely popular and in 2008 "Sleeping Beauty – the Panto" was completely sold out before the first performance!

In the early days plays ran for only one or two nights. Later it became standard to run from Thursday to Saturday, and still later this was extended to Wednesday to Saturday. In 1989 the leap was made to a split run of Wednesday to Saturday on two successive weeks, and in 1997 a Saturday matinee was added for those who could not venture out at night. In 2006 a Preview night was added, two nights before the Wednesday opening and is free of charge and available to various organizations.

Several years ago Season Tickets were offered and have grown in popularity with 180 being sold in 2009. This growth is due in part to seat reservations being offered to Season Ticket holders in 2003. Also in 2003 a website, stlukesplayers.org was established giving the latest information,

including auditions, performance dates and a listing of all past productions complete with photographs.

Over the years, St. Luke's Players has contributed much to the Church. Each year at least 80% of the net profits are handed over in lieu of rent. In addition, the Players have upgraded the stage facilities by purchasing new lights and improved sound equipment. In the past they have provided stage curtains and the hall with 120 comfortable chairs. We very much appreciate the support, cooperation and assistance provided by St. Luke's Church. The year 2009 marked the 60th anniversary of the Players, and to celebrate a special evening for members new and old was held. We look forward to the next 60 years!