

A History of Student Theatre at the University of Pennsylvania

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Preface

Before we begin, I encourage the reader to supplement this book with a chart I have made which shows every group which has ever performed theatre at Penn, and when they did so. The chart is too large to be reproduced in this book, but it can be found at the time of publishing at this link: (<http://i.imgur.com/IQjazW8.png?1>). If this link no longer works when you are reading this book, please feel free to contact me at the email address I list lower down in this preface, and I will get send you a working link or file right away.

This history is one in which I myself have taken part, and I undeniably have certain biases regardless of how objective I attempt to be. I have taken the utmost care to tell the facts in as true a form as I am able to, but truth itself can be somewhat subjective. Opinion inevitably creeps in. In the final chapter of this book, where we reach the present day, my own participation in events will begin to have an unavoidable effect on how I tell the story. So for the sake of full disclosure, and to explain why I am so interested in the topic, I should explain my involvement in the Penn theatre community. In the fall of 2010, I came to Penn as a freshman and was cast in *Into the Woods* with Penn Players and *Parade* with Penn Singers. At the end of freshman year, I was elected to Penn Players Board, eventually becoming Chair in the 2013-2014 school year. I have acted in five Players shows, produced one, and props designed for another. I have also acted in plays and musicals with Quadramics, iNtuitions Experimental Theatre, Front Row Theatre Company, Stimulus Children's Theatre, the African American Arts Alliance, the Underground Shakespeare Company, and the Theatre Arts Department. I also have attempted to revive theatrical performance in the Philomathean Society's Performance Committee, and the culmination of that effort was a staged reading in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Players on April 27, 2014. I took part in several events worth noting in this book, and we will get to them near the end. But as you read the following history, note that although I am a Penn Player through and through, I will do my best to not give Players preferential treatment.

I expect that many readers who were involved in Penn theatre over the years will notice mistakes that I made, or important events that I missed. While I can't promise that there will be a Volume 2, I would

still love to hear from readers about the things they experienced at Penn. Feel free to reach out to me at jeremyaberman@gmail.com. If you read this far enough in the future where I no longer have a Gmail account, then try tracking me down on QuakerNet or whatever service Penn has in the future for contacting other alumni.

Also, please read the footnotes. They are usually not just sources, but rather fun little tidbits that don't fit in the main narrative.

Introduction: The First Opera in American History

The year was 1757. In Europe, Frederick the Great of Prussia was taking Prague from the Austrian Empire in the Seven Years War. England, taking a step towards global empire, took Calcutta from the Mughal Empire in India. Fort William Henry in New York was taken by the French in a siege that would later be recounted in *The Last of the Mohicans*. And on 4th and Arch Streets in Philadelphia, a group of students raised their voices in song.

The University of Pennsylvania says in its official publications that it was founded in 1740, but this does not hold up to even the slightest amount of investigation.¹ A building was erected in 1740 by prominent Philadelphians to serve as a preaching hall for the famous traveling evangelist George Whitefield. When Whitefield was not in town, the hall, which was the largest building in Philadelphia at the time, was to serve as a charity school as well. But due to lack of funds, the building sat vacant from the moment it was built, and the organization which would evolve into the University of Pennsylvania would not even be conceived for several more years. This came in 1743, when Benjamin Franklin first had the idea for an academy. It was not until 1749 that Franklin circulated a pamphlet titled “Proposals for the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania,” in which he laid out his vision for a “Public Academy of Philadelphia.” Franklin gathered a Board of Trustees out of leading Philadelphians, the first such board that was non-sectarian, and met with them on November 13, 1749 to determine a location for their school. They obtained the deed to the unused preaching hall on 4th and Arch, and on August 13, 1751, the Academy of Philadelphia under Provost William Smith² took its first

¹ This information mostly comes from Penn’s own website, where they lead by saying that Penn was founded in 1740 and then immediately supply details which make that claim seem tenuous at best.

<http://www.upenn.edu/about/heritage.php>

² Smith was an Anglican priest, and would eventually become an opponent of the democratically elected Pennsylvania State Legislature due to his loyalist tendencies. In 1779, the Legislature seized the building and issued a charter for the University of the State of Pennsylvania. Smith continued to operate the College of Philadelphia on his own, however, causing a schism in the city’s schooling. In 1791, a new charter was issued for the University of

secondary students (high school students in today's parlance). The same trustees did not charter a College of Philadelphia until 1755, presumably when the secondary students finished their schooling and were ready for an undergraduate education.

Provost Smith included oratory in his curriculum, and he used dramatic vocal performance as an oratorical exercise. The first such performance (and the only one that I was able to find any record of) was an opera called *The Masque of Alfred* which was given over several nights at the end of January and beginning of February in 1757, in only the third year of the College's existence. *The Masque of Alfred* was a patriotic opera written initially in 1740 by the Scotsman James Thomson, who had an interest in promoting a national British identity of which he was a member, as opposed to the dueling English and Scottish nationalities of which Thomson was on the losing side. The music was composed by Thomas Arne, and the book was modified in 1751 by David Mallet. This opera contained the song "Rule, Britannia!" which is still considered the sort of theme song of Britain, with only "God Save the King/Queen" as its rival. If you look it up right now, you will surely recognize the tune. In this time period, the most popular style of stage musical was the ballad opera, which was essentially a comic play with songs added in. *The Masque of Alfred*, an epic about the hero-king Alfred the Great of England, was more along the lines of what we would consider an opera today. It has therefore been said that the College of Philadelphia's performance of *The Masque of Alfred* was the first performance of serious opera in the history of the United States.³

One musician for the performance was a student by the name of Francis Hopkinson. Hopkinson was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence for New Jersey, and he also served as judge of the Federal District Court for the District of Pennsylvania. But perhaps his most noteworthy legacies were of the artistic variety. He achieved some acclaim as an author and songwriter in a time when

Pennsylvania, and this new organization combined the two warring factions by taking twelve trustees from each to make of the new board of trustees.

³ Jack McCarthy of several Pennsylvania historical societies makes this claim in an online article which I am relying upon for much of my information on the subject. (<http://hiddencityphila.org/2012/02/something-new-in-america-serious-opera-1757/>)

those practices were uncommon in the Colonies. His 1759 song “My Days Have Been So Wondrous Free” is considered to be the first musical composition ever put to paper by an American. And most importantly, Hopkinson is usually believed to be the designer of the first draft of the modern American flag. He is credited with a design that included thirteen stripes, alternating red and white, and a blue field in the top left corner with thirteen white stars on top. The only differences between his design and the final one were that his stars were not arranged in a circle, and his stars contained six points instead of five. But other than that, the Star-Spangled Banner can be attributed to Hopkinson. Returning to our story, Hopkinson likely contributed some music to the Masque, which was adapted from the Arne version by Smith for the student production.

The performance was well-received, and a review exists today which has been excerpted by several secondary sources. An excerpt of the review by “J. Duche” in the *New Hampshire Gazette* of March 18, 1757 is here reprinted:

With regard to the young Gentlemen who so lately entertained the Town with this Performance, the Applause they met with, from crouded and discerning Audiences, during the several Nights of its Representation, is the best proof of their Merit, as it will be their justest Praise and highest Encouragement....

The Kindness of the Gentlemen who politely obliged us with the instrumental Parts of the Music is to be acknowledged. As to the young Ladies, who were so great an Ornament to the whole Representation, by their performance of the vocal parts, the most grateful acknowledgements have been already made to them by some of those young favourites of the muses, on whom they conferred so great an obligation, and therefore such acknowledgements ought not to be separated from this account.

All I shall say is, that as the engaging condescension of these ladies conferred an obligation on their friends, it did honour to their education. For to see a number of young proficient in music and oratory, capable of representing to advantage, in all the complexity of its parts, so difficult and beautiful a performance as that of Alfred, would be an honor

to the taste and improvement of any country. And it must be doubly so to see these talents and improvements reserved for the most exalted subjects, and bestowed for none but the noblest purposes!⁴

Of note is that this performance also contained women, despite the College only containing male students. I'm not sure where they found the women, but Smith and his students did what few other Penn groups would do for almost two centuries by performing co-ed theatre. While further operas may have occurred after this first Masque, no evidence of these have survived to the present day on Penn's campus or on the internet. The next performance that we have evidence of would not occur for another 120 years, by a group that would form the earliest beginnings of the Penn theatre community that has survived to the present day.

This group's story begins in the summer or autumn of 1877, when a Miss Berthoud of St. Louis visited her friend Miss Bond at her home on 1608 Locust Street. Present at this meeting was another Bond, James Bond, who belonged to the class of 1877. Miss Berthoud spoke to Mr. Bond about a recent travesty (a sort of spoof) she had seen on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. James Bond was interested in reading the travesty, so Miss Berthoud sent him a copy by post when she arrived back home in St. Louis. Bond met with his friend William L. Rowland, who then met with William P. Elwell, and all three Pennsylvania men agreed that the play was worth repeating for a University audience. In March of 1878, the three men met at Mr. Bond's house, and the University Dramatic Club was founded. These men and a small group of their friends presented their musical travesty of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Amateur Drawing Room on the evening of Wednesday, May 15, 1878.

Since that Wednesday, Penn students have produced thousands of plays and musicals for dozens of different companies. There have been several key shifts in the theatrical culture at Penn which have led us from the first incarnation of the University Dramatic

⁴ *The Colonial American Stage, 1665-1774: A Documentary Calendar* by James A. Coombs, page 184. The excerpt in question can be seen on Google Books as of 2015.

Club to the TAC-e-centric community we have today. This book is not a history of every single performance that has ever occurred, but rather a history of the trends, patterns, themes, and major events in the Penn theatre community. When I mention the “theatre community” (and I will quite a bit in these pages), I am referring to the group of students, faculty, and professionals who work to produce theatre on Penn’s campus, for Penn’s campus. What I will focus on the most are those groups and persons who shaped the overall community in their day and had an effect on the community’s future. Each and every theatre company which has ever existed at Penn and left a record will be described in this text, but groups that came into being and then died out in isolation from the rest of the groups on campus are not usually what I refer to when I mention the “community.”

In order to provide a structure to this text, and to organize my own thinking on the subject, I have identified five rough eras in the history of Penn theatre, which I will briefly summarize below before launching into full scale descriptions of the groups and trends that have comprised Penn’s theatre community. It is important to note that these eras came from my mind as a way to categorize and describe the differences I perceived between different time periods. The students who lived in these times would not have perceived themselves to be members of the eras I have placed over them, and so the eras become less useful the closer you look at the actual events that occurred.

The first era, which I call the Age of Beginnings, is characterized by small groups of students deciding that they ought to put on a play. Sometimes these groups would attempt to stick together and put on second or third plays, but more often than not, these were one-off efforts. Some, like James Bond’s play, were revue-style musicals. Some were Ancient Greek plays in the original Greek language. This era lasted roughly from the 1870’s until the turn of the century, with Mask and Wig being the only group to survive the era.

I have labeled the next era as “The Golden Age” (a term fraught with meaning and controversy which has fallen into disfavor in academic circles, yet which I found to do a suitable job of describing the activity of the era in question) not because the quality of its theatre was any better than the theatre which came before or after it. On the contrary, despite all of its performances being lost, I would wager that simply based on the smaller number of students, the relative lack of

women, and the lack of a high school theatre scene as large as today's, the plays from the early twentieth century were almost certainly of lower quality than today's. I call it a Golden Age because there was never another time where the idea of putting on a play was so attractive or feasible for such a large number of student groups. Various clubs and societies which had no reason to add theatrical performance to their lists of activities nonetheless began to put on annual plays. The French, German, Spanish, and Italian societies all had annual plays. Both of the campus' literary societies began focusing on theatre. The engineers and the architects both had plays. And even more companies came to be which existed solely for the purpose of making theatre, and these companies did not go away after two or three productions as the earlier groups did. The Golden Age could be argued to have begun with the foundation of Mask and Wig in 1888, but I would place its origin at 1900, when the Cercle Francais performed its first play in French. Prior to that, there had been a dearth of any other theatre on campus aside from Mask and Wig, but after that, the theatrical opportunities at Penn exploded. The Golden Age came to a close during the Great Depression as the various groups all either ceased to exist or stopped putting on plays, almost universally citing expense as their reason for stopping. The era that came next began on May 15, 1936, the day that the Constitution of the Pennsylvania Players was ratified.

The Age of Players is the era in which the Pennsylvania Players came to dominate Penn theatre, including under its umbrella a busy season of plays, musicals, one acts, workshops, and classes. The Penn Players were formed from the union of the University Drama Club (not the same organization as the one co-founded by James Bond), the Zelosophic Society, the Touchstone Society, and the Bowling Green Players. These groups were having financial difficulties as the Golden Age came to a close, and they viewed union as the only way to survive. In this period of time, lasting from the signing of the Players constitution until the creation of the Undergraduate Assembly in 1972, no theatre group other than Players and Mask and Wig was able to remain in existence for more than five years. Players filled roughly the same role that the entire TAC-e community does in the early 21st Century. This was the first era which a Penn theatre student from 2014 could be transported to and still be basically familiar with how everything in the theatre scene operates.

The Age of SAC has its origins in the creation of the Student Activities Council in 1968, but the creation of the Undergraduate Assembly in 1972 is when money began to become available in sufficient quantities to support a vastly increased number of performing arts groups. The first sign of this in the theatre community was the creation of Quadramics as an independent, student-run and student-directed theatre company in 1973. Because of SAC and the UA, an environment developed in which anyone who wanted to create their own theatre group could do so. This could apply to people who were unsatisfied with the current theatre groups, or people who had an idea for a brand new style of theatre that had never been seen on campus before. From this point on, new theatre companies with student directors began to appear and grow, creating real competition to Players for the first time. For the first time in Penn's history, a student who arrived at Penn wanting to create theatre had numerous viable options to pursue. The various groups collaborated, most notably on the annual winter one acts, but there was still no overarching body which organized Penn theatre specifically. Also worth noting is that a Theatre Arts Program with a theatre major came into being during this period, forever giving Penn an official theatre program in addition to the myriad of options for producing student theatre.

The Age of TAC-e, the current age, is defined by the existence of TAC-e (the Theatre Arts Council, and some say that the "e" stands for "extraneous," but do we believe such rumors?), a strong and relatively centralized subcommittee of PAC (the Performing Arts Council), which is itself a part of SAC. The theatre companies which comprise TAC-e act as the backbone of the Penn theatre community, and the students who work with TAC-e groups make up a majority of the students who work on theatre at Penn. While non-TAC-e companies have thrived on campus for the entire length of TAC-e's existence, these groups have either been close enough to TAC-e to the point where they are essentially in the same community (Singers), completely independent with no effect on the broader theatre community (Without a Net, Club Singapore, etc.), or created in direct response to the mainstream theatre community, often to address its perceived shortcomings (Underground Shakespeare, the Theatre Arts Program). The dominant trends of this era are the growth and

centralization of TAC-e and the proliferation of cultural theatre groups on campus.

The five sections of this history will each tackle a different one of the five eras I have defined and outlined above. It is extremely important to note that I have invented these categories to help shape this history, and that they do not at all exist as tangible objects. The difference between the last year of one era and the first year of the next is often unnoticeable, and the difference between the first and last year of the same era usually massive. In addition, not each chapter is created equal in terms of the reliability of the sources presented. The Golden Age and the Age of Players rely on an abundant amount of primary source material including programs, tickets, photographs, and Penn yearbooks. The Age of Beginnings relies on extremely sparse primary sources, and the most recent two eras rely heavily upon interviews conducted by me, with the chapter on the current era including a good deal of information supplied from my own memory.

This is the history of student theatre at the University of Pennsylvania in as thorough a package as I could compile. Enjoy!

The Age of Beginnings

The University Dramatic Club

The University Dramatic Club, as its founders chose to call it, was very likely the first theatre company composed of students to ever exist at the University. I suspect this because no record of any earlier group has survived to the present day, and the University has always been fairly good at keeping records of its pre-twentieth century activities. Mary Ann Meyers, who began to write a history of theatre at Penn prior to mine, also came to the conclusion that the UDC was Penn's first theatre company, but she refers to them as "the Thespians" and attributes a later play to them which they had nothing to do with. Whether or not this was indeed the first company and their *Romeo and Juliet* was indeed the first theatrical production, later Penn groups behaved as though this were the case, attempting to invoke the UDC's success by adopting its name⁵.

The information we have today about the first incarnation of the UDC comes to us from an article written for the May 1919 *Alumni Register* by Arthur L. Church, '78. Church was the secretary of the UDC and played Friar Laurence in the *Romeo and Juliet* travesty. Elwell, Rowland, and Bond added 16 other University men to their number by the time of the first performance, with Rowland as director (and *Juliet*) and Elwell as manager or stage manager. Elwell rewrote much of the play to suit a Philadelphia audience, as it was originally written by Charles C. Soule for the University Club of St. Louis and had its share of songs which were specific to those environs. That St. Louis production went up on January 16, 1877. Elwell, as stage manager, also "arranged the scenery, the entrances and exits, and in fact dominated every detail of the play." Bond and Rowland cast the show, and Charles F. Moore played the piano and served as music director. Penn had moved its campus from Ninth Street to West Philadelphia earlier in the decade, but students still tended to live in

⁵ Two more University Drama Clubs would come into existence at Penn. The first imitator, beginning and ending in 1886, may have overlapped with the original, which gave its last performance in 1887. The second was the major campus success from 1921 which later morphed into the Penn Players.

what we now refer to as Center City. Rehearsals would sometimes take place on campus in Professor Marks' or Dr. Samuel P. Sadtler's rooms (an early example of Penn's faculty aiding in the theatrical process⁶), and sometimes students James Bond and C. H. Colket would host rehearsals in their homes. Several members of the cast later became members of the Orpheus Club, the oldest still-existing men's chorus in the nation, which had started in Philadelphia in 1872. The students had a strong sense of humor, and two wrote a mock program in which they accused all the other actors of being drunks.

The performance was first given on May 15, 1878 at the Amateur Drawing Room, a theater which once stood at 17th and Chestnut. The play was a great success, buoyed by its clever lyrics and familiar tunes⁷. The UDC gave a second performance of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Children's Hospital in May 1878, and a third on December 13, 1878 which the University Orchestra assisted. With all this success performing "Romeo and Juliet," the UDC began to look for other shows to perform.

This time, they wanted to produce their own play from scratch, with Elwell taking the lead in writing it. The Club announced a "Dramatic Satire entitled 'Gamma Nu or Our Fraternity,'" But it was never performed. This proved to be a pattern with the UDC. In late 1878, a travesty on Macbeth (which might be the same play as "Gamma Nu") was rehearsed by the UDC according to the Record (Penn's yearbook) of 1879, but was never produced. The 1880 Record notes that the UDC continued to exist, but had no plays to produce. In 1881, the Record tells of a travesty on Schiller's "Wilhelm Tell," but this too never saw the light of day. Eventually, it must have become clear to the UDC that they would find no success in original ventures, and they returned to *Romeo and Juliet* in 1882, this time with a mostly new cast. This production was given for the benefit of the Young America Cricket Club, and many new cast members were cricket

⁶ Professor Sadtler was the professor of general and organic chemistry at the University. I couldn't track Marks down.

⁷ One example, to the tune of "Dixie:"

I am the druggist's new apprentice,
For mixing pills and squills my bent is.
I am the lad who draws the soda,
With aromatic smile and odor.

players. It was given on April 14, 1882 at the Germantown Opera House, and this cast then reprised their performance at the Amateur Drawing Room on April 24 and 25. The UDC essentially ceased to exist after these performances, although two final performances of *Romeo and Juliet* were given five years later on April 30 and May 5, 1887, at the New Amateur Drawing Room on Fortieth and Locust. After this, the original University Drama Club unquestionably ceased to be, although the 1887 troupe may well be considered an imitator version just like another club from that same year.

Other Dramatic Clubs

1887 played host to two different groups at Penn which called themselves the University Drama club. The aforementioned UDC which gave the final performances of *Romeo and Juliet* was tenuously linked to the original UDC, but there was also another attempt at a University Dramatic Club which was entirely unrelated to the original. The '87 Record tells of a student named Davie Werner Amram who gathered together some friends to create a new theatrical organization called the University Dramatic Club. He attempted to put on *Othello* (there is no evidence to suggest that this is anything other than the actual Shakespeare play, but it may be a travesty), but was unsuccessful in guiding it to the stage. This incarnation of the UDC lived and died in the same year that the original UDC saw its end. It is a possibility that Amram's UDC was the same group which put on the final two performances of *Romeo and Juliet*, but the Record makes Amram seem so inept that I get the impression his group was entirely unsuccessful in all its endeavors.

More successful was the Thalia Dramatic Club, mentioned both in Church's account and in Penn's Records. It is interesting that Church saw fit to mention Thalia, considering that he was asked merely to tell the story of *Romeo and Juliet* for the *Alumni Register*. It may be that Thalia was such a presence on campus that the UDC's final days cannot be described without mentioning the existence of Thalia. This club, created in December of 1880, consisted of nine members, led by Stage Manager Clifford Pemberton Jr, Business Manager Severo Mallet-Prevost, and Musical Director Lewis Neilson. Their first

production, given January 1881 at the Amateur Drawing Room, was *Fra Diavolo Travestie*, a musical burlesque by Henry James Byron originally produced in London in 1858. Unlike the UDC, they were able to follow up their first play with a second, giving *Ali Baba or the Thirty-nine Thieves* on April 7, 1883 at the Amateur Drawing Room. We have no other information about the Thalia Dramatic Society, but it is entirely possible that they put up more than two different plays. They may not have. Either way, they didn't last for very long, with Penn's next theatre exploits all focusing on Ancient Greek drama.

Greek Plays

In 1885, after the last known Thalia performance but before the last known performance of UDC's *Romeo and Juliet*, Dr. William Pepper, the Provost of the University, gathered together 19 men for the Joint Committee to Produce a Greek Play. This committee contained students, alumni, and faculty, and was very much a child of the Penn administration. Nonetheless, it was the students who spent the most time and effort over the next year producing the Greek play. The committee settled upon *The Acharnians* by Aristophanes. This is not a household name today, but it holds some significance in the history of American theatre. For this was not only the first Greek play at Penn, but it was also (according to those who performed it) the first Greek comedy ever produced in the United States of America. I see no reason to doubt this claim, as an obscure Greek comedy performed in the original Ancient Greek is the kind of niche theatre that you wouldn't have expected to see financed outside the walls of a university which offers courses in the language.

On May 14, 1886, *The Acharnians* opened at the Academy of Music on Broad and Locust. Programs were distributed containing the script and the plot of the play, so that non-Greek speakers (the majority of the audience) could follow along. The action was interspersed with dancing and song, composed by Penn Professor Hugh E. Clark, making the night a full evening of entertainment. The Philadelphia premiere was so well-received that the cast and crew traveled to New York City for a performance at their Academy of Music on November 19.

The Greek Play, as it was usually called in campus publications and letters, had a profound effect on Penn and on its theatrical community. This production involved around hundred students between the singers, dancers, actors, and scenery and costume crews. There were sixty-two students who appeared onstage in the show. It was an academic and social endeavor which captured the focus of Penn's student body in a way that would be impossible today with our much larger student body. Over the next decade, two more Greek plays would be put on by the school, the next one being Aristophanes' *The Clouds* in 1892. This time, the students performed a new English translation of the play rather than using the original Greek. It does not seem as though this production was as large in scale as the first Greek Play, but it was successful enough to merit a third known Greek Play in 1896, Euripides' *Iphigenia Among the Taurans*, with music composed again by Professor Clark. The 1892 Record includes a statement in the section for the Department of Arts saying "We have succeeded pretty well in murdering several Greek plays along with the other conventional duties of thorough-going Arts men." Whether these plays are simply *The Acharnians* and *The Clouds* or other plays put on within the Department, perhaps in class, will likely never be known. The Department seems to be taking credit for the Greek plays it "murdered," but I can't find any record in the materials on *The Acharnians* (and there are abundant materials in the Penn Archives) of this production being overseen by the Department. Either way, this trend of putting on school-wide plays was superseded by a newer trend of putting on shows within preexisting or new students groups.

Mask and Wig

Mask and Wig is the oldest and most successful theatre company at Penn, putting on at least one original musical every year since 1888. It has been a vital part of Penn's culture for over 125 years, and is known in cities around the world. It is difficult to even imagine Penn without Mask and Wig. The company has been keeping careful track of its history from its inception, and on their website⁸ can be

⁸ <http://www.maskandwig.com/about/history/>

found an abundance of materials from each and every show they have ever put on. Here, I will only cover the broad strokes of their history.

In 1888, a student named Clayton Fotherall McMichael decided that he wanted to do a different sort of theatre from the Greek plays that were put up every now and then. He gathered a group of students, all male due to the lack of women at Penn, and created a musical comedy group in the style of burlesque. Burlesque was not just a synonym for striptease at the time. It was a popular musical form which contained, according to the Mask and Wig website, “overblown characterizations, loose plotting, musical interludes, and parody of high art.” These shows would all be written by Club members, as was normal in the era before book musicals. If you were going to perform a musical that was not an opera in this time period, it would almost have to be original. Revue, vaudeville, burlesque, and minstrelsy were the most popular musical forms of the day.

Mask and Wig’s first production was called *Lurline*, based on Henry Bryon’s *The Nymphs of the Lurleyburg*. The show was performed one time on June 4, 1889 at the Chestnut Street Opera House and was a huge financial success. The show became an annual tradition, with subsequent runs getting longer and longer. The alumni of Mask and Wig formed their own Graduate Club which helped financially support the undergraduate club. In 1894, Mask and Wig purchased a property at 310 South Quince Street which held an old church and a stable. Prominent Philadelphia architect Wilson Eyre helped Wig remodel the building into a new clubhouse with meeting and rehearsal space. Maxfield Parrish, a well known illustrator, designed the interior with caricatures of Club members, a tradition which still continues today.

Wig was very successful in the coming years, both artistically and financially. They even had the funds in 1908 to pay for a building in the Quad dormitories, which is still named after Mask and Wig. In the 1950s, Wig had its own Pennsylvania railroad car which it used to travel the country and make its name known. Wig says that “the likes of Frank Sinatra, Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, and Les Brown all covered Mask and Wig tunes.” I have heard this claim many times and never seen any source on it, but Wig is generally very careful with its history, and I have no reason to believe that this is not true. In 1961, as Wig’s popularity dimmed a bit from its peak days in the 1950s, Wig

switched to a satirical revue format with *Wry on the Rocks*. They did not return to the student-written book musical until 1992 with *Myth America*, and they have performed an original musical every year since. Starting in 1971 with *No, But I Read the Cliff Notes*, Wig added a fall show to their annual spring musical. The fall show consists of short, SNL-style skits in the first act and a mini musical in the second act, with the music coming from well-known pop and show tunes and the lyrics being written by the Club.

If this chapter on Mask and Wig is shorter than the upcoming chapters for other, more obscure theatre groups, it is because the Club has successfully used the same formula for over a century, and there is little in the way of change or controversy to discuss. The Mask and Wig Club operates under the motto “Justice to the stage and credit to the University,” and it has succeeded at these missions since its inception. Mask and Wig is still the most popular arts group at Penn, and its Business Staff, Cast, Crew, and Band are not easy to get into. But even as Wig forever has a place at the university, it has always existed outside of the core theatre community at Penn. In Age of Beginnings, Mask and Wig basically was the theatre community, and even into the early years of the Golden Age, Wiggers supplied much of the talent in newer, upstart theatre groups. But before too long, there was a community of actors and techies who were serious about performing existing plays and musicals, and these students often did not overlap with Mask and Wig’s membership at all. Once women arrived on the scene and began to reach parity with the men in theatre, a full half of the theatre community was not even capable of being involved with Wig if they wanted to. Today, some Wiggers still participate in other arts groups, but for the most part, Wig is off on its own in the performing arts community. Wig would probably say that this is because they are so far above the rest of the community, but regardless, a new collection of groups were about to materialize on campus, and their presence sparked a new Golden Age in Penn theatre.

The Golden Age

Theatre by Non-Theatrical Clubs

At the turn of the century, theatre ceased to be an activity which would only rear its head at Penn once every other year or so, and it became an activity that much, if not most, of Penn's student body participated in with one group or another. Mask and Wig was still going strong some twenty years after its inception, but there were no other groups in the late Nineteenth Century dedicated to performing a show every year. This was about to change, and in a big way.

While Mask and Wig and the Greek Plays dominated Penn theatre for the end of the Nineteenth Century, the Twentieth Century brought with it a sort of theatre that had not yet been seen at Penn, which would ultimately become the most common form of theatre on campus. Beginning with Le Cercle Francais in 1900, various non-theatre groups at Penn tried their hand at performing plays, usually on an annual basis. These included other foreign language societies, and also some academic departments.

Le Cercle Francais existed before it performed its first play, although it is not clear for how long. The 1902 Record says that "it was an affair run by the trustees for the benefit of the ladies of Philadelphia, now and then giving lectures, attended exclusively by instructors' wives and others." (p. 170) Le Cercle Francais decided to perform a play entirely in French at the urging of Dr. Samuel P. Molenaer. This may have been a way for them to practice the language and showcase their mastery of it. For their play, they selected *Le Médecin malgré lui* by Molière. They were coached by a figure referred to in the 1901 Record as M. Le Maistre, although this "Mr. The Master" may have been born with a different name. The cast was made up mostly of students in the French Department, with L. H. Davis of Mask and Wig playing the lead, although a Civil Engineer named Barlow played a role when they ran out of willing French students. The cast was all-male, with men playing the female roles. The play was performed on March 29 and 30, 1900 with English summaries being given to the audience, most of whom know schoolboy French at best. The production put the group \$200 in debt, which was not an insignificant sum for the time. The 1901 Record, written in a joking tone which makes its claims not

entirely trustworthy, claims that this sum was the result of the fee they paid M. Le Maistre. Provost Harrison bailed the group out, showing perhaps the earliest example of the University funding a Penn theatre group.

Once year later, on March 29, 1901, Le Cercle Francais returned to the stage with *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, again by Molière. They brought back Le Maistre and fell in the same amount of debt, only to be rescued by the same Provost. They had established a pattern, and they would continue it to great success for many years. The 1901 play was performed at the New Century Drawing Rooms, which seems to be where all the subsequent Cercle plays were presented. 1902 brought Molière's *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, and the jettisoning of M. Le Maistre allowed the group to get its finances back in the black for the first time since starting their theatrical endeavors. Future plays would be directed by students and alumni of the group. The money from this production financed several lecture series the following year, allowing the Cercle to expand their activities. They also moved into a large room in the basement of College Hall which Penn provided for them. 1903 saw the group leave Moliere behind and expand to two plays per year with *L'Avocat Pathelin*, an anonymous medieval farce, and *La Grammaire* by Eugène Marin Labiche. In 1903 or 1904, Professor Florian J. Vurpillot became "directeur general" of the troupe, directing their shows for at least another four years. Professor de la Rochelle succeeded him after 1907.

1903 was a significant year in that three other groups of students at Penn either performed for the first time or began planning for 1904 performances. A standalone Greek play was performed on April 28 and 29, once again *Iphigenia Among the Taurans*. The Greek Department supervised the production, egged on by the popular campus figure known as "Pomp," who had all the old costumes from *The Acharnians* in his collection.⁹ Directed by a Dr. Lamberton, this version

⁹ Pomp's real name was Albert Monroe Wilson (1841-1904). An African-American, Wilson began working as an errand boy to the janitor at Penn in 1854 at the age of 13. He became attached to the class of 1858, who arrived at Penn when he did, and they nicknamed him "Pompey," which was later shortened to "Pomp." He became very popular with many subsequent Penn classes, and was often included in the class photograph over the next several decades. Wilson eventually became the head janitor when the two brothers he

had original music composed by a Dr. Clarke to distinguish it from the 1896 version.

The Priestly Chemical Society also is said to have performed its first annual play in this year.¹⁰ While the French, Greek, and Arts Departments¹¹ had gotten involved in theatre before, this marked the first time an academic society which had nothing to do with the arts performed art nevertheless. Very little is known about these Priestly plays other than the fact that the final one ever mentioned in the Record is the 1914 Christmas play, *Sherman was Right*. Also known is that their 1912 play, *The Isle of Jungaroo*, featured blackface. This was not uncommon in that time period, with Mask and Wig continuing to use blackface for several decades more.¹²

Then in 1904, the Deutscher Verein followed in the footsteps of their French brethren by instituting an annual play in German. To no one's surprise, the Germans were more financially successful than the

worked under had both died. At some point, Professor John Fries Frazer recognized Wilson's potential and hired him as his primary lab assistant, a position he used to offer to students. Wilson set up the lab before chemistry and physics lectures, and he took part in the experiments along with the Professor. He continued on in this role with Professor Henry Morton after Frazer passed away. Wilson became quite good at chemistry and medicine, and he became a respected healer in the African-American community of Philadelphia. Nathan Francis Mossell, M.D. 1882, the first African-American graduate of Penn Medical School, refers to him as "Dr. Wilson" in his autobiography, but notes that while Wilson was allowed to attend lectures at the medical school, he was not allowed to graduate. The Penn Archives also say that Wilson could be arguably called the first University Archivist, as he kept many artifacts of Penn's history in his basement. The Class of 1904 began planning a celebration in his honor called "Pomp's Jubilee" to coincide with commencement that year, but he died of pneumonia on March 9. A funeral was held for him on College Green which the entire University attended, and a scholarship was founded in his name by alumni.

¹⁰ The 1913 Penn Record

¹¹ I have seen no specific evidence that the Arts Department ever performed theatre, but there are little hints which give this impression. The Record entries for other groups sometimes mention Shakespeare productions which are supervised by Arts or English professors, though I can't otherwise find specific records of them.

¹² The Pennsylvania Players are the oldest still-existing theatre group at Penn to never use blackface

French and did not live in debt for several years.¹³ Professor E. C. Wesselhoeft coached the students in the pronunciation and the production was directed by Herr Th. Bollmann, stage manager of the German Theatre, a professional company. Their first play was Roderick Benedix's comedy *Dr. Wespe*, performed on May 4 in the New Century Drawing Rooms in German. The next year the Germans gave *Ein toller Einfall*, and an annual tradition was cemented. At times they were also known to perform in Saint James' Hall. The Deutscher Verein seems to have remained more dedicated to its non-theatre activities than was Le Cercle Francais, holding lectures and focusing on the German language as much as the plays themselves. But they were primarily a theatre company, just as the French proved to be. From this point onwards, the French and Germans and their respective groups were at the forefront of Penn Theatre along with the Mask and Wig Club. This arrangement continued for about a decade until their nations of origin had a slight disagreement, and some people became very upset.¹⁴

¹³ While we're making German Empire jokes, note that the Deutscher Verein page in the 1905 Penn Record mentions "Doctor Wilhelm Hohenzollern (LL.D. Hon. U. of Pa., 1905)." I looked it up, and it turns out that Penn did give Kaiser Wilhelm II an honorary degree. There's a page on the Penn Archives site which reads: "Honorary degrees were given to many Germans in the first half of the twentieth century, but perhaps none more notable than the one awarded in 1905 to the German Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm II. Another notable honorary degree, awarded in 1911, went to Johann Heinrich Von Bernstorff, the German Ambassador to the United States and Mexico from 1908 to 1917. Von Bernstorff is best known for his anti-American, pro-German sabotage attempts (some successful) conducted in New Jersey and elsewhere during World War I. These activities continued until President Woodrow Wilson broke off diplomatic relations with Germany, forcing Von Bernstorff to return to Germany in 1916. The Penn Trustees struck both Von Bernstorff and the Kaiser from the roll of honorary degree recipients January 14, 1918, making them the only two people in Penn history to have been struck from the honorary degree recipients roll."

¹⁴ If my writing has taken a lighter turn, it is because I am inspired by the tone of the yearbooks in the early Twentieth Century. These Records supplied a great deal of fact mixed with a greater deal of wit and charm. Sometimes this led to the students saying things that weren't true, or even inventing fictional groups in the Record. After all, any student at the time would know that the groups weren't real, so they saw no need to cater to the demands of a historian over a century into the future. This gives us such groups as the "Fat Men" in the late Nineteenth Century or "The Ancient and Honorable Society of the Runt" in 1906. Although it is also entirely possible that these groups did meet

Back on the technical side of things, the Architectural Society also got some skin in the game in 1906, when they performed their first annual play. The Record of that year has nothing written about the endeavor, but there is a photograph of the cast in costume. All male, naturally. Their second play in 1907 was titled *Our English Cousins*. Their 1908 show, *The Brain Trust* was a musical, with original songs by Horace Hokanson, a junior. Hokanson also wrote the music for the 1909 production, *Spaghetti Land*, with a script by Herbert A. Schmidt. It is unclear whether the first two plays were also musical, or whether the subsequent plays were. It is also unclear whether these plays were all original or not. But it is clear enough that the theatre performed by the Architectural Society aspired more to the style of Mask and Wig than to the style of the language Societies.

The Zelosophic Society and the Philomathean Society

The Zelosophic and Philomathean Societies were two other campus organizations which existed for some time before their first forays into theatre, but these groups deserve special attention due to their role both in the Penn theatrical community and in Penn's larger history. The Philomathean Society is the oldest continually existing literary society in the United States, and it recently celebrated the Bicentennial of its founding in 1813.¹⁵ Philo was a place for Pennsylvania men who wanted a sense of brotherhood that wasn't offered by the school at the time. They looked for a sort of "college experience" of the sort we would look for today, as opposed to school just being something that the sons of gentlemen did on their way to inheriting their fathers' careers. Philo was a sort of proto-fraternity, but as modern fraternities began to take root and grow, Philo settled into its role as a center of learning and literary exercise for the sake of it. Philo offered lectures, debates, and literary exercises¹⁶ by members at their

regularly and were not merely gathered together for a yearbook photo. Either option reveals a good degree of cheek.

¹⁵ I was admitted as a member of the Philomathean Society in Spring 2013 as these Bicentennial Celebrations began, and I was elected Archivist of the Society at the very end of the Fall 2013 semester.

¹⁶ Literary exercises, or "litexes," are presentations on academic topics given by a member of the Society to the rest of the Society at meetings. Each Philo

gregarious meetings. In 1829, the Zelosophic Society was formed on the same model, and the two societies had a friendly rivalry which stood at the center of Penn extracurricular life. Zelo ceased to exist in 1875, crippled by the University's move to West Philadelphia and by competition with the new Franklin Scientific Society. But in the fall of 1892, Arthur Hobson Quinn¹⁷ and Cheesman A. Herrick of the Class of 1894 founded the Historical Society of the University of Pennsylvania. In response to an editorial in *The Pennsylvanian*¹⁸ in December 1892, the society adopted the name of the Zelosophic Society of the University of Pennsylvania. The old Zelo's alumni approved of this new organization and bequeathed their library and archives to the group. In 1908, Philo and Zelo both decided to expand their operations to incorporate theatrical performance into their lists of activities.

The seeds of this were sown in 1904, when Philo invited the Ben Greet Company to perform at Penn. What Philo calls the Ben Greet Company was probably the Elizabethan Stage Society, a traveling English company which focused on Shakespeare. Ben Greet was the leader of this troupe at one point, making it the most likely identity of the group which came to Penn. Walter C. Pugh, C'04, managed the show for Philo. Philo was inspired by this show to perform their own theatre, but these desires did not result in anything tangible until May 20, 1908, when Philo performed *The Second Shepherd's Play* of the Towneley Cycle of Mysteries at the Botanical Gardens.¹⁹ Chas J Cole Jr. C'09 is listed as the "Play ~~Chairman~~

has to give one litex before they graduate. I gave two, which is somewhat rare, as there was an opening at the end of my junior year and no seniors still needed to give theirs. So I gave a litex on Quadsience in my junior year, and I gave a more serious litex on the history of Penn theatre in my senior year, which won the John Frederick Lewis Memorial Award for best litex of the year. I adapted this book into a PowerPoint presentation for the purpose.

¹⁷ Quinn is an extremely important figure in the history of Penn theatre, particularly as an alumnus and professor. He also wrote several histories of early American theatre and of Philadelphia theatre. His daughter, Kathleen Carberry Quinn, would become even more important to Penn theatre history by becoming the first director of the Pennsylvania Players, a position she held for several decades.

¹⁸ The non-daily ancestor of the current *Daily Pennsylvanian*. This magazine was founded by Philo before spinning out into an independent publication.

¹⁹ The Botanical Gardens are now colloquially known as the Biopond, although the current Kaskey Park in which the Pond is located is much smaller than the

Manager” (striketrough in the original) in Philo records dating from the time. The next year, Philo performed *The Two Angry Women of Abington*, an Elizabethan comedy by Henry Porter, at the Botanical Gardens. According to an undated note in the Philo archives, “This was the biggest financial success of Philo’s early plays. Profits from this production would finance a complete refurbishing of these Halls. Philo being an all-male society at the time, the “two angry women” were actually played by men in drag.” By this point, Philo had a Play Committee helmed by Frederic C. Dietz ’09. After a break from theatre in 1910, Philo returned to the Botanical Gardens in 1911 with the anonymous Elizabethan comedy *Mucedorus*. For the next few years, Philo bounced around from theater to theater performing their annual play, mostly leaving the Botanical Gardens behind for real theater buildings in Philadelphia that they would have had to rent. The fact that they’d pay this money shows increased dedication to theatre by Philos, and an increased confidence in their ability to make money from ticket sales.

This whole time, Zelo had also been performing theatre. The Ben Greet Company inspired them as well, and they certainly weren’t going to allow Philo to put on plays without trying to do better themselves. On May 15, 1908, The Zelosophic Society performed *She Wou’d and She Wou’d Not* at the New Century Drawing Rooms. Maurice S. White ’09, president of Zelo in Fall 1909, purportedly²⁰ came up with the idea for Zelo to do a play when he was still a junior, probably after hearing about Philo’s plans. The Zelosophic minutes of the Regular Meeting on February 21, 1907 simply state: “Moved, seconded, and carried that the Zelosophic Society give a play and amended that the present play committee be empowered to carry out all arrangements and details.”²¹ White almost certainly took a leading role in the production of the plays in his capacity as president, and he also acted in both of the first two annual plays, the second being *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* in January of 1909. Zelo, like Philo, the Architects, and the Chemists, continued to carry out a great deal of other business,

old Gardens site. The Leidy Lab building was erected in 1910 over part of the Botanical Gardens, so the space in which Philo would have been able to perform in 1911 is somewhat similar to the space that exists today.

²⁰ 1908 Record

²¹ Zelo Minutes, Feb 21, 1907, taken by Secretary George Jarvis Thompson

and the play in fact seems to have been a minor part of their annual schedule at first. Zelo's debates, dinners, lectures, and picnics took up the majority of their time. But they performed at least one play every single year (except for 1910, oddly enough, just like Philo) from 1908 to 1936, and each year their theatrical endeavors grew in relative importance to a degree that was not matched by Philo. As early as 1915, Zelo began to perform one play each semester instead of only one per year.

Not to be outdone, Philo made Philadelphia headlines in 1916 by reconstructing the Globe Theater in the Botanical Gardens for a production of *A Comedy of Errors* in early May. The structure was taken apart after the show, but photographs exist showing its formidable size. The show was advertised as being on Shakespeare's Tercentenary Year, or the three hundredth anniversary of his death. Women also acted in this play, making this one of the first opportunities women ever had to act on the Penn stage. 1916 also saw Philo institute their new annual workshop called "The Playshop" in which students would submit original one act plays, some of which would then be performed by Philo. The stage for these plays was a traveling cart which could be wheeled around Penn and then unfolded to create a basic stage and backdrop. This was the first time at Penn that student one acts would be solicited and performed, and it would continue until at least 1920, after which there are no records of Philo presenting student-written one acts.

Zelo offered instruction to students through courses in dramatics which were open to all Penn students. These courses were taught by Mr. W. M. Price and his wife Mrs. Sara Price, the two of whom had directed most of Zelo's recent plays. Sara Price in particular was a fixture in Zelo as their director, and so the first woman to play a significant role in Penn theatre was perhaps the most important individual in Penn theatre for a good decade. These classes were the only classes offered at Penn which treated on the actual performance and production of theatre, as opposed to the literary study of plays. The courses were not offered by the University itself, but just by Zelo. From this point on, Penn student theatre groups would be the main source of theatre classes at Penn until the University officially created a Theatre Arts Program in the 1970s.

In 1917, Philo and Zelo, rivals though they were, teamed up to produce what was probably the largest theatrical event in Penn's history, *The Masque of American Drama*. 700 students were involved in the performance, mostly onstage but also backstage. An audience of nearly three thousand saw the opening night performance in a new makeshift structure in the Botanical Gardens on May 14, 1917. The space was designed to seat 10,000, but the *Old Penn* weekly magazine speculated that the lower than expected attendance was due to soldiers leaving Penn to go fight in Europe. Even so, 3000 is a remarkable figure. The seeds for the Masque were sown in 1915, when Zelo performed *The Prince of Parthia* in the New Century Drawing rooms. This play, written by Thomas Godfrey in 1765 and originally performed in Philadelphia at the Southwark Theatre in 1767, was the first play ever written by an American and performed in America. The year after Zelo's performance, George F. Kearney, C'17, had the idea to present a history of American theatre from before the Revolution to the present as a collaboration between Philo and Zelo. Arthur Hobson Quinn, now Dean of the College and the chairman of the Philadelphia Committee on the American Drama Year, became involved and positioned the Masque as the climax of the American Drama Year in 1917²². Albert Edmund Trombly of the Romance Language Department of the College wrote the script and lyrics, and Reginald de Koven, a theatre composer of the time, wrote the music. George Kearney was the director of the management team, so his job would probably best be described as producer if the show were to be produced today. The show was split into five eras: Colonial and Revolutionary, Early National, Westward Migration, Civil War, and the Present. John Wilson Brooks, Arch.'19 designed the set, which was on an even greater scale than the recreation of the Globe the previous year. There were three separate stages for the main action, the pageant, and the pantomime. The framing device involved an actor playing America courting an actress playing Drama, with his attempts interrupted by Puritanism, Commerce, Industry, War, three women representing Foreign Plays, and Politics. In the end, however, Love prevails and

²² This year was the 150th anniversary of the first performance of *Prince of Parthia*

America joins with Drama.²³²⁴ Segments of five plays, one from each era²⁵, were presented throughout the night with song and dance interspersed throughout. It was a truly monumental achievement, the likes of which is no longer seen in live theatre. This production also featured a large number of women from the School of Education²⁶, including the actresses playing Tragedy, Comedy, and Drama. The production served as a way for the Penn community to build up its patriotic fervor in preparation for the Great War in Europe. The proceeds were donated to University of Pennsylvania Base Hospital Unit, a military hospital located in the United States. The Masque is perhaps the most patriotic thing Penn has ever done, and photographs of the performance are still displayed in the Philomathean Society's Halls on the fourth floor of College Hall.

The Masque would be the first and last theatrical collaboration between Philo and Zelo, but they did not slow down their individual efforts in the following years. Both Philo and Zelo even put up multiple plays the same year the Masque was produced. Kearney, the leading figure in producing the Masque, also wrote a One Act for the Philo festival of 1917 in which female students took part as actors. Zelo Alumni performed *The Importance of being Earnest*, their show from 1913, in place of the traditional annual Zelo show, as the undergrads were busy preparing the Masque. After the Masque was complete, things returned to normal for the most part. On May 11, 1918, Zelo performed *The Man on the Box* in the New Century Drawing Rooms and then took it on the road to several nearby Army camps. Philo's

²³ *Old Penn*, May 18, 1918. "An Intimate View of the Masque." Walter Yust

²⁴ America also rebuffs Cinema in Act Five. Perhaps an Act Six for the future would have seen America leaving Drama for Cinema after all, followed by America also shacking up with Television and Internet. (*Alumni Register* "The Nationalistic Aspect of the Masque." Albert Edmund Trombly)

²⁵ The plays were *Prince of Parthia*, *The Gladiator*, *Francesca Da Ramini*, *Rip Van Winkle*, and *The Scarecrow*. Not all the playwrights are recorded.

²⁶ At this point in Penn's history, women could only enroll at the school through the School of Education. Beginning in 1933, there was a College for Women which contained all the undergraduate women at Penn who would otherwise be in the College of Arts and Sciences. By the 1950s, women could attend any school at Penn except for the College, as those women were placed in the College for Women instead. While CW women took the exact same classes as College men, they remained separate but equal until 1975, when the College for Women finally was dissolved into the School of Arts and Sciences.

theatrical performances slowly waned over the course of the 1920s, with the Playshop ending after 1920 and the annual play eventually phasing out after 1929. Zelo, on the other hand, increased their theatrical output dramatically over the 20s and 30s. This began with Zelo's first "Potpourri" in 1921, which was a collection of one acts. Another potpourri followed in 1922, although it is not clear whether these plays were written by students. They also put on two plays per year throughout the entire 1920s, and performed even more frequently in the 1930s, by which point Philo was out of the theatre scene. But we have neglected the other theatre troupes, so let us explore what they have been up to before we get to the 1930s and exit the Golden Age.

The Great War

In the years leading up to 1914, The Deutscher Verein, Le Cercle Francais, The Architectural Society, and the Priestly Chemical Society had all been performing at least one play per year. The French presented two plays per year on occasion, but they usually stuck to one. The French also upgraded their theatre space from the New Century Drawing Rooms to the ballroom of the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel, a building which still stands at 200 S. Broad Street at the corner of Walnut Street.

Another language-based group was founded in 1912, Der Deutsche Kreis. But if it seems odd that two German language theatre groups would be on campus simultaneously, wonder no longer. This new group was for Penn women! Women were accepted into the school by this point in the School of Education and the School of Fine Arts. As we will find out in the next chapter, they may have had an even more voracious appetite for performing theatre than the men, but at this stage they only had one group of their own, Der Deutsch Kreis. The Kreis' first president in 1912 was Carrie Adler, and their first performance was not until 1914, which was a singularly bad time to be starting German endeavors.

Another notable occurrence in 1914 was the existence of a new men's foreign language company, Il Circolo Italiano, which was dedicated to the appreciation and study of the Italian language, partially through theatre. Again, the word "circle" was used for a foreign language theatre company, just like "Cercle" and "Kreis." The 1914

Record says that Il Circolo was in its third year of performing annual plays in 1914, which would put the first Circolo show at 1912. The only play that we know with certainty was performed by Il Circolo Italiano is *Il Trionfo d'Amore* on April 15, 1914.

But the most important event of 1914 was the outbreak of war between France and Germany. After a decade of the French and German societies enjoying multi-page spreads in the yearbook right next to each other, the Deutscher Verein disappeared from the yearbook in 1914. It is likely that they still quietly performed plays, because the 1916 and 1917 Records mention that they did plays in those years. The 1917 Women's Record page for Der Deutsche Kreis says "This winter, due to the present unsettled international situation, we deemed it wise to refrain from all public demonstrations, and have, therefore, confined our activities solely to the meetings. But for next year, we have wonderful plans, and if you are wise, you will join us in time to participate in them." Their wonderful plans did not pan out, and the Kreis disappeared from the yearbook forever. And as for the men, after 1917 the Deutscher Verein never appeared in the Men's Record again (we will see that they appeared in the Women's Record again in the 1920s). It is no coincidence that this removal of German culture from campus happened after the United States entered the First World War on April 6, 1917.

Le Cercle Francais also reached its greatest level of prestige during the war, acting as a symbol of French-American brotherhood. In 1915, Le Cercle presented *Jean III*, likely the comedy by Sacha Guitry about a French knight at war. The timing of this military-themed play is undeniably related to the war, and all the proceeds of the play were donated to France. On February 15, 1916, the women created a French society called La Salon Francais, and beginning in 1917, they performed with Le Cercle in all its subsequent productions (until 1921, at which point the two groups merged entirely under the name Le Cercle Francais). In 1918, once America was in the war, Le Cercle Francais presented *Le Malade Imaginaire* at the Bellevue-Stratford, donating the proceeds to the reconstruction of the village of Villequier-Aumont in France. The French Ambassador to the United States even attended this performance. The 1919 Record says that "Financially and artistically the play was far superior to anything yet attempted." The Record was known to make such statements every few years, but it is

entirely plausible that a French Society during WWI would put a ton of money into a French play which was meant to raise money for France.

Other theatre continued as usual despite the oncoming war. Back in 1915, a “Committee on Greek Drama”²⁷ built a set in the Botanical Gardens and performed Euripides’ *Iphegenia in Tauris* and *The Trojan Women* on June 8 and 9. Philo had performed in the Botanical Gardens in past years, but it is this Greek performance which helped serve as an inspiration for *Prince of Parthia* and the Masque the following two years. Articles about the Masque frequently refer to its location as being on the site of the recent Greek play.

The academic-oriented societies which performed theatre saw one group exit and one enter in this time period. 1914 was the final year in which the Record mentions a play in the section for the Priestly Chemical Society. This play, almost certainly their last, was called *Sherman was Right* and performed around Christmas. But within days of that final performance, from December 18-19, the Whitney & Civil Engineering Societies initiated a new and enduring theatrical tradition on campus with their first musical comedy, *Where There’s a Will There’s a Way*. This musical was in the style of Mask and Wig, an original comedy with original musical numbers and a variety of sets and costumes. After this first play, the engineers created a separate organization called The Towne Scientific School Drama Association which performed *The Girl in the Purple Mask* on December 9-10. In 1916 they performed a show called *In Bad in Badinbad*. The following two year saw no Engineering show, but they returned with a vengeance in 1919 under their new and final name, *The Men About Towne Club*. The MATC’s first play was called *Much Ado About Nothing Much* and performed December 17-19. The MATC became a campus fixture for engineers and non-engineering audiences, performing one extravagant show every year on the same scale as Mask and Wig. In addition to these shows, they would also have several dances and balls throughout the year. This organization continued until at least 1942, after which they never again appeared in the Record. It seems likely that they ceased to exist when Penn students left en masse to serve in the military for World War II. Many campus organizations were disbanded during

²⁷ This is probably affiliated with the Classics Department, or whoever put on previous Greek plays

the Second World War, and those that survived were usually hanging on by a thread. But we will get to that story later, in the Age of Players.

The Architectural Society was not to survive the 1920s, with their actual plays ending in 1919, after which they switched to putting on a massive annual ball and pageant that wasn't quite as play-like in fashion. But their entry in the 1922 Record sadly informs us that even this pageant was not tenable anymore. "Unfortunately, due to the excess of time and labor expended in making last year's Florentine Ball such an overwhelming success the faculty, weeping all the while, have turned their thumbs down forcibly on another pageant this year. We weep with them and sincerely hope that their aversion to pageantry will not be augmented in any way between now and next spring, and that those of next year's class, who can do so, will pursue them to allow as fine a production as ever. We will be on hand to help." Future Records indicate that no pageant would be put on again.

Women's Theatre at Penn

I have already mentioned the women's participation in the French, German, Philo, and Zelo plays, but women also had their own diverse array of theatrical opportunities without the men of Penn. Two early traditions for Penn women which continued for many years were the Pirates' Ball at the beginning of the year and Pêle Mêle later in the year. The Pirates' Ball involved the women dressing up as pirates, gathering in a large room or gym, and kidnapping the leaders of the freshman class. No actual scripted theatre was presented, but it was a grand tradition with costumes and fun that is worth noting. This survived until at least the late 1940s. Pêle Mêle Night was a sort of indoor carnival for Penn women in which they would have songs, dances, and small dramatic entertainments put on by themselves. Sometimes they were the only ones in attendance, and sometimes they would invite others. Local high school girls would often be invited. The first mention of Pêle Mêle in the Women's Record was in 1915, but the first actual play names mentioned as being performed at Pêle Mêle in the Women's Record were "Mme Soiree a Sergeant Hall" and "Wasn't it Strange?" by student Ingrid Nelson in 1916. This Pêle Mêle and these plays took place in the men's Engineering Building. Pêle Mêle continued every single year until 1950, after which I can find no more

record of it. The women's and men's schools were about to integrate in all but name, so perhaps its reason for existing disappeared.

In the fall of 1916, six Penn women founded a chapter of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) which quickly grew to 101 members by the spring, when it put on two plays to help fundraise for its charitable activities. They put on two more short plays at the Engineering Building in spring 1917, *Trouble at Satterlees* and *Our Aunt from California*, and these were likely the last plays ever put on by the YWCA (later just called the CA).

The first Women's Glee Club was founded in 1917. For several decades, this group was nearly as successful as the Men's Glee Club, although they eventually fell out of existence a few years before 1957, when they reemerged as the group that would become Penn Singers. Girls also started acting in Philo's Playshop this year.

1917 also saw the creation of a new women's literary and dramatic society, The Quill and Bauble, by Ida J. Whitaker. Founded in September 1917, this society was to be for Penn women what Philo and Zelo were for Penn men, but dramatics were a key part of their identity from the start. This was not a literary society that expanded into dramatics recently; it was a literary and dramatic society. In spring 1918, they held a competition for student written one acts by women, received eight submissions, and performed three. Those three were *The Bubble* by Marguerite Fischer, *The Demigod* by Helen Bailey, and *The Truthful Liar* by Helen Small. Their next major play in 1919 was also by Helen Bailey, *A Tempest in a Teapot*, and its cast included nearly half of the female student body.²⁸ Their one acts for 1919, performed from May 16-21, were written by Fischer, Bailey, and newcomer Ruth Wilson, and this time they used men from Philo to play the male parts. In terms of their literary accomplishments, Quill and Bauble made two

²⁸ It must be noted that each class of women students was quite small at this point, usually smaller than fifty until the 1920s. This made it so that the same women were in almost all of the clubs, and if some of those women liked to put on plays, they would just put on plays for each club they were a part of. For example Ida Josephine Whitaker founded Quill and Bauble, was UA President for Women, participated in the YWCA plays, the Philo plays, Women's Glee, Sphinx and Key, and the alumnae plays (which I don't know anything about). This helps to account for the explosion in female plays that begins at this time.

rival literary magazines called *The Quill* and *The Bauble*, which were intended to complement and compete with one another.

Several other groups started performing theatre around this time as well. On May 3, 1918, the Catholic Students Association, which included men as well, put up a play in Mercantile Hall. On May 12, 1919, they performed *The Lion and the Mouse* at the Bellevue-Stratford. In 1920, they changed their name to the Newman Club, becoming a chapter in the national organization (like Hillel but for Catholics). The Newman Club still exists today, but their final play seems to have taken place around 1935, which is the last time a female student mentions having been in the “Newman Players” below her yearbook picture. In 1919, a math club called the Vinculum started their first meeting of the 1918-1919 school year with a short play called *A Feeling for Numbers* by Helen Bailey, a known student playwright. This was probably the only play to ever be associated with the Vinculum, but it serves as an example of how the same women participated in many different groups and brought their theatre with them, regardless of how unrelated the club was. In 1924, the Classics Club (which may have just been for women) also began performing plays from Ancient Greece and Rome. By 1930, they no longer performed scripted plays, but still had an annual Saturnalia festival.

Back on the language front, the Spaniards entered the fray with the co-ed El Circulo Español in the 1918-19 year. Their first play, performed in May, was called *Uno de Ellos Debe Casarse*. A few years later, in 1921, Dr. Romera-Navarro supposedly founded “The Spanish Club”²⁹, and this club presented Benavente’s *Los Intereses Creados* at the New Century Drawing Rooms. All future mentions of Spanish plays would be under the name of The Spanish Club, so it is possible that this is a completely separate group from El Circulo Espanol. That may have been a men’s club and this a women’s club, or El Circulo may have just died. Still, it lasted for another 15 or so years along with the other language groups, all of which happened to die at just about the final year of the Golden Age, a fact I did not even know yet when I first named and dated the Ages (it is amazing how well real life sometimes follows mental structures you have built to describe it). The Italians, Germans (Der Deutscher Verein had returned to campus and to

²⁹ The 1921 Women’s Record

the stage in 1922), and Spaniards all were listed under women's pictures in the 1935 Women's Record as groups which they had participated in, but this does not necessarily mean that the graduating seniors still were members of the groups. They may have passed out of existence three years earlier, and the women were just listing groups they had done at any point in their entire four years at Penn. The final time Le Cercle Francais is mentioned performing a play is also in the 1935 Women's Record with Miguel Zamacois' one-act, *Un Arriviste*. With this, foreign language theatre at Penn passed out of existence for almost 80 years.

Back in 1920, the Jewish students of Penn decided that they ought to keep up with their erstwhile Christian brethren. The Menorah and Zionist Societies (which had already existed on campus for some time and had 125 members of both genders) put on a play in the spring. There is no more mention of another Jewish play until 1945, when a group called The Hillel Players³⁰ put on some one-acts. Jews being Jews, there probably was a little bit of theatre before, in between, and after these two stated shows. But there wouldn't have been very much, or else they would proudly have mentioned it in the yearbooks like all the other clubs that did theatre. These clubs, some for women and some for both genders, made up a thriving theatre scene for women at Penn. Both genders now had ample opportunity to perform onstage, but there were still no coed groups which existed for the sole purpose of performing theatre. That was about to change.

The University Dramatic Club Returns and Rises to the Top

In what was probably the most important event in the history of Penn's theatre community since the founding of Mask and Wig, a new organization by the name of the University Dramatic Club was formed in 1921. It is not clear whether they were calling on the tradition of the old UDC, but this group certainly surpassed that old UDC in every way. From the outset, the UDC had the backing of the school in the form of Professor Dolman, a member of the English Department who would take a leading role in Penn's theatre

³⁰ Not related to the recent Hillel Players/Teatron other than their association with Hillel.

community in later years. Their stated goal was to produce serious, non-musical theatre on campus, a niche that had only been filled by the literary societies up to this point. But the UDC would have no other duties or affiliations. Like Mask and Wig, they were a group that came together only because of their shared love of theatre. The University Dramatic Club was also the only dedicated theatre company at Penn which allowed women among their ranks. The shows were co-ed and so was the leadership of the organization. Their first production was *The Admirable Crichton* by J. M. Barrie, performed from May 16-21 at the Little Theatre (now known as the Plays and Players Theatre). They followed this on November 24 of the next school year with *Mrs. Bumpstead Lee* at the Philomusian Club. In March of 1922, they expanded their operations by giving two one acts in addition to their main spring play. They also took one of the one acts to a Forum Contest at the Academy of Music, where they competed against one acts from Philo, Zelo, and other local theatre companies.

In 1923, the UDC opened a local chapter of Theta Alpha Pi, a national theatre fraternity, for UDC members “whose work has been of a certain caliber demanded by the fraternity,”³¹ both male and female. There was some sort of system involved in determining eligibility for Theta Alpha Pi, in which one would earn points by working on a certain number of shows. After that, there may still have been an application, or entry may have been automatic. It may have just been a popularity contest for the inner circle. But Theta Alpha Pi existed throughout the length of the UDC’s stay on campus, only going away when the Pennsylvania Players took over. This fraternity still exists nationally, but there seem to be very few chapters, and their online presence is limited to an infrequently updated Facebook page.

In 1926, the UDC added discussion groups about theatre to its roster of events, led by three men names Dr. Flaccus, O. Stuart Thompson, and Dr. MacDonald. They might or might not have been professors, but these discussions were not official university courses. In the 1925-1926 school year (almost certainly fall 1925 based on future years), The UDC had their first annual one act playwriting competition and festival for students. This could be extremely significant if they managed to continue their annual one acts until 1936, as that would

³¹ 1923 Record

mean that this annual competition would directly evolve into the Winter TAC-e Collaborative One Acts that Penn presents every year, making this is the oldest annual theatrical performance which is still performed at Penn aside from Mask and Wig's annual show. There is very little record of what shows the UDC did between 1931 and 1936, though, so I'm not sure if the one acts were actually continuous. In 1927, the UDC took a new turn, producing an original three act play called *Beethoven* in which the Philadelphia Orchestra and soloists provided musical accompaniment to the play. Frances Ann Wister, a student, wrote the play, and Bernard Rothberg starred as Beethoven.

The Quill and Bauble's theatrical side was an unfortunate casualty of the University Dramatic Club. With women as equal participants in a dedicated theatre troupe, there was little need for the Q and B to perform plays anymore. Beginning in 1924, the Quill and Bauble focused exclusively on its magazines and other literary activities. It wasn't until 1931 that their entry in the *Women's Record* finally came out and said that they were just a literary society and not a dramatic one.³²

By 1930, the *Record* informs us of a robust lineup of activities put on by the University Dramatic Club throughout the year. In addition to their two mainstage plays and one acts competition every year, they also ran a series of monthly one acts, held stagecraft classes³³, threw a large midseason party, and performed biweekly radio plays.^{34 35} This was a program of events which put the UDC at the top of Penn's theatre community, with the UDC almost Mask and Wig's equal in terms of prestige. For all intents and purposes, they were the theatre department Penn didn't officially have. In 1930, it seemed as

³² "In recent years, however, there has been a wider range of clubs open to those with dramatic inclinations, and consequently the Quill and Bauble has gradually become altogether literary." *The 1931 Women's Record*

³³ Zelo's minutes indicate that they no longer offered classes, so the UDC filled the niche

³⁴ Radio plays became very common events for Penn theatre groups in the coming decades. At first these were for local Philadelphia stations, but as soon as Penn developed its own station in the 1940s, radio plays by the Pennsylvania Players became common fare.

³⁵ Biweekly sounds a bit too frequent to me. Perhaps the *Record* means semiweekly, or perhaps the UDC was just exaggerating. Maybe they really were biweekly. But they certainly did happen, no matter what.

though the University Dramatic Club would remain at the center of Penn's theatre community for decades to come. But in 1936, the UDC ceased to exist, giving up its sovereignty to form the Pennsylvania Players with three other theatre groups. In order to see why this happened, we have to catch up with the other theatre groups and see where they fit in in the 1930s. First, let's turn to the last two theatre groups we have not yet mentioned, both by Penn women.

Bowling Green and Touchstone

The most important tradition of Penn's College for Women which we have ignored thus far is the annual May Day festival. In 1921, the Women's Undergraduate Association under the leadership of Regina Kelley (who was also the president of the Quill and Bauble in 1920-21) organized an outdoor festival on May Day in a conscious effort to create a new tradition. A production of Ben Jonson's *Pan's Anniversary* was given, and there was dancing around a May Pole. A May Queen was also crowned from among the female student body. I don't know who it was, but I would be surprised if it wasn't Ms. Kelley. The location, based on where it was in later years, was almost certainly the Botanical Gardens where the Masque of American Drama had been presented. No large theaters were ever constructed for May Day, as the plays were always intended to be connected to the spirit of the outdoors. As planned, this did become an annual tradition, and Penn's women went outside every year on May Day to put up a play (usually a fairy tale), dance around the May Pole, and crown a May Queen. A new organization was created after the first festival to be in charge of May Day, rather than having the WUA manage it directly. This organization was called Bowling Green, and they organized every May Day festival from that point on. The first major change to May Day occurred in 1924, when May Day was performed indoors because Penn's greenhouses were being renovated, removing the Botanical Gardens as a possibility. For the next three years, the play would be referred to not as the May Day play, but as the Bowling Green play. The last time this occurred was in 1926, when Bowling Green performed Clemence Dane's *Will Shakespeare* at the Plays and Players Club.

In 1927, the May Day festival returned, with the new venue being the yard of H. Jean Crawford's home. Miss Crawford, as she was known, was the Directress of Women at Penn for many years, and she hosted May Day at her house in Fox Chase. The play was Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. Miss Crawford hosted May Day again in 1928 with *Rip Van Winkle*, in 1929 with *Peter Pan and the Little Boys Who Never Grew Up*, and in 1930 with an unnamed fairy tale which featured dance interludes by the Dance Guild. The next time a location is mentioned in connection with May Day in the Women's Record, it is 1935 and the venue is the Morris Arboretum. By 1936, the Women's Student Government has regained control of May Day as a whole, but Bowling Green still was responsible for the play. However, according to the 1936 Women's Record, Bowling Green's main activity that year was not the May Day play, but rather a play they put up in Irvine on April 17th called *Pomander's Walk*. In that Record, they styled themselves as "the women's honorary dramatic society." It is not clear how long Bowling Green had been performing non-May Day plays, but this 1936 play was almost certainly their last. They were to sign the Constitution of the Pennsylvania Players less than one month later.

The final women's theatre group I have not yet mentioned is the Touchstone Society. Like the Quill and Bauble, Touchstone was a literary and dramatic society, although from the start they were more focused on dramatics, and they published no magazines. They somehow managed to exist alongside the University Dramatic Club when the Quill and Bauble could not. This also gives credence to the theory (which I will expound upon in the next chapter) that the UDC became weak in the early mid-thirties, or at least could no longer assert its dominance over Penn theatre. Touchstone began in the fall of 1934, with membership limited to fifteen, and they met twice a week in Sergeant Hall to have literary productions and prepare for performances. Their first play, at a reception given by Miss Crawford, was Saki's *Baker's Dozen*. Next they performed J. M. Barrie's *Twelve-Pound Look* during Junior Week. At the Christmas Tea they gave "an unusual Russian play."³⁶ Their school year closed out with a series of three one acts, one of which was written by a student. In this first year,

³⁶ 1935 Women's Record

Laue Krummeich was the President of Touchstone, Elizabeth Balbernie was Chairman of Dramatics, and Dorothea Smart was Chairman of Publicity.

After this first year, it seems that Touchstone focused much more heavily on theatre. In the 1935-36 year, they performed twelve one acts at Miss Crawford's twelve teas throughout the year. They performed a play at May Day along with Bowling Green's play, and they performed a play in Houston Hall. At this point they had twenty women, and also created an insignia for themselves featuring the comic and tragic masks. Unfortunately, they chose just about the worst time to create a brand new theatre group at Penn. For they too signed the Constitution of the Pennsylvania Players in the spring of 1936.

Wrapping Up the Golden Age

As we approach 1936, the theatre community at Penn has reached a clear equilibrium. There are six groups which put on at least one show per year, and all of these groups are very well established. Mask and Wig, the University Dramatic Club, the Men About Towne Club, the Zelosophic Society, the Bowling Green Players, and the Touchstone Society. Of these groups, the most firmly entrenched on campus was Mask and Wig, as always. The UDC and Zelo both put on a variety of non-musical plays every year, both either offered classes or had offered classes in the past, and both performed radio plays. Zelo first started their radio plays on WLIT³⁷ on November 17, 1932, and both groups continued these for the rest of their existence. Theatre also began to make inroads into official Penn course offerings as well, with Professor Dolman offering Play Production, the first practical theatre course offered at Penn for credit, in the School of Education in the

³⁷ There is no record of which station the UDC performed on, but WLIT is the best possible guess considering that Zelo performed for them. WLIT originally went by the name of WDAR, but changed to WLIT in 1925 under the ownership of the Lit Brothers Department Store. In January 1935, WLIT merged with WFI to form the new station WFIL. WFIL still exists today at AM 560. It was a popular top 40 hits station through the 1960s, but with the decline of AM as a musical format, it evolved into the Christian talk channel it is today. Dick Clark began his career as a WFIL disc jockey, and grew to national fame on "American Bandstand," a television show which started out as just regular "Bandstand" on WFIL's TV station in Philadelphia.

1920-1921 school year. In 1927-1928, the course was switched into the College of Arts and Sciences. This class would continue in the College until the 1940s, when it still was offered, but only in the College of Women.³⁸ This was an isolated theatre class, not part of any department or subgrouping within a major.

So stood the Penn theatre community at the dawn of 1936. By the end of the year, three of those six groups would no longer be producing theatre, and two of them would cease to exist altogether. In their place would stand a new theatre group, larger and more central to campus life than any theatre group which had ever stood before. The age which I have labeled "Golden" was ending, but a new age was about to begin in which theatrical opportunities for Penn students would become greater than ever before.

³⁸ F.J. Dallett, Penn Archives UPF 8.5 Box 38, Academics

The Age of Players

The Motive

By 1936, the Golden Age of Penn Theatre was deeply in decline. All the foreign language clubs had ceased to perform theatre within the past few years. The academic departments and their attendant societies had called it quits on the stage over a decade earlier. The only groups that still performed theatre were Mask and Wig, the Men About Towne Club, Philo, Zelo, the University Drama Club, Touchstone, and the Bowling Green Players. This is not an insubstantial list, but these groups were mostly not doing very well financially. Finances were what had led to the extinction of the earlier Golden Age clubs, and they were a looming problem for the survivors as well, especially with the Great Depression still raging. At this time, the University guaranteed no budget for any club, so if the students who belonged to a club ran out of the money, or at least the will to keep injecting funds into the club, that club would simply cease to be. We will never know whether Zelo, UDC, Touchstone, and Bowling Green could have survived for much longer had they continued on as usual after 1935. It is likely that one or two of them could have muddled through, as Bowling Green in fact did, well into the 1960s. But these four groups decided not to take the chance, and they found that safety does indeed lie in numbers.

It is unfortunate that no records of the talks between these four groups exist at the University today. Any minutes which might have given a clue as to why four seemingly successful groups would give up their sovereignty are long since lost to history. The Zelosophic Society minutes indicate nothing but great success on the stage. Indeed, Zelo had actually increased the frequency with which they performed in the year leading to 1936. 1935 was their most prolific year yet, with three productions spaced throughout the year. Further, no evidence regarding the motives of these groups can be gained from interviews with the involved students, as they are almost all deceased, the one or two survivors being a century old and nearly impossible to track down. However, we do have a wealth of secondary sources (Records and early histories of the Penn Players) which claim that the ancestor groups

simply did not have enough money to stay afloat. Given that money is the cause of most expired theatre companies at Penn, there is little reason to doubt these accounts. I do speculate, however, that at least some of the groups had enough money to last alone for quite some time, but were persuaded that the quality of theatre they could produce with combined budgets was superior enough to warrant a union. After all, Bowling Green continued to exist under its own name and with its own budget for more than a decade after they joined the Pennsylvania Players.

On the Fifteenth of May, 1936, the Constitution of the Pennsylvania Players was signed by the leaders of the University Drama Club, the Zelosophic Society, Touchstone, and the Bowling Green Players. In this document, the four groups forswore the right to perform anything on stage that was not under the Players name (with the exception of Bowling Green's May Day plays), and the UDC ceased to exist entirely. Touchstone made it one or two more years as a literary society. The Zelosophic Society would continue to hold debates and publish its magazine, *The Critic*, but its entire theatre arm was folded into Players (although a member named H. Lamar Crosby wrote a play called *The Key* which was put on for an audience only of Zelos in 1938). The board was to have seven members, four of whom had to be men and three of whom had to be women, with two board members being elected within the ranks of Zelo, one chosen from the Touchstone Society, and one elected from Bowling Green.

What happened to the University Dramatic Club, though? Were they not just in a position of dominance over Penn theatre? Their position is hard to track down in the years between 1932 and 1936. The last play we know they performed from checking the Penn Archives and the Men and Women's Records was Henrik Ibsen's *Wild Duck*³⁹ in spring 1931. The entry in the Women's Record that year makes a point of calling them financially successful. But after that, we never hear of

³⁹ Based on my non-exhaustive investigation of the matter, this would be the last time a Penn student group would ever perform an Ibsen play until Penn Players' production of *Hedda Gabler*, which will open two days from the time I write this sentence. Said play will be my last performance at Penn, after which my term as Players Chair will be complete. [Editor's note: It has now been several months since that performance, and we carried it off pretty well, I'd say.]

another UDC play again. We know that they existed until 1936, but we don't know much more. Let us look at the evidence. In spring 1931, we hear from the Women's Record that the UDC has put up three plays in the previous year, multiple radio plays, and is financially successful. The Women's Record would not mention the UDC ever again, but the 1932 Record for men does include a coed picture of the honorary theatre fraternity of the UDC. The 1933, 34, 35, and 36 Records all do not mention the UDC. The 1935 Women's Record, where each woman mentions every student group she has ever participated in, does not contain a single mention of the UDC by any woman. If the UDC actually died after its picture in the 1932 yearbook, and no freshmen in the 1931-32 year took part in the UDC, then it is theoretically possible that not a single member of the College for Women's Class of 1935 was ever in the UDC. But I don't buy it.

I don't doubt that the UDC let its foot off the gas pedal after its busy 1931 year, but they couldn't have disappeared completely. After all, they still existed in 1936 to sign the Penn Players Constitution. Also, the second Chairman of the Pennsylvania Players and the person in charge during their first play, Theodore Kirschner, was a man, and not a member of the Zelosophic Society. Therefore, by process of elimination, he must have been a member of the University Dramatic Club, and the other three groups therefore placed themselves under the leadership of a former UDC member after giving up their sovereignty (the first Chairman was Robert Schaeffer, a Zelo member). The UDC must have still had a good degree of power in the Penn theatre community in 1936. And it is unlikely that they would go from such a successful 1931 year to anything less in 1932. They probably were less busy as they approached 1936, but since we can say with some degree of confidence that the 1932 yearbook just failed to include UDC activity which did occur, it is therefore likely that the next four yearbooks also just failed to include UDC activity which did occur. After all, the 1930s yearbooks also left out the Men About Towne Club, which we know existed into the Forties, and Philo, which still exists today. Zelo and Mask and Wig kept their pages, but Zelo saw barely any coverage. Depression probably took its toll on paper and ink costs, causing the Records to be of inferior quality for a few years. Even so, the UDC was probably hurt by the Depression as well.

The relationship between the four factions which joined to create Players is not described in any existing materials, but some hypotheses are possible given the information we do have. I suspect that the Penn Players are less of a union of four equals and more of a reinvigoration of the University Drama Club with the consent and resources of the other three groups, who were convinced to give up sovereignty due to their poor financial outlook. The most obvious piece of evidence is that the first several Chairmen of Players all had been members of the University Drama Club. Players and the UDC also had similar self-professed goals, to provide co-educational, serious drama on campus. Also, the University Drama Club and Zelo were co-ed, unlike Touchstone and Bowling Green, which were all female. This means that female students who took part in the female groups were also likely to have acted with the UDC and Zelo, giving them some loyalty to those groups whereas the male students would feel no loyalty to the all-female groups. Another piece of evidence is that the UDC went all-in with Players, completely ceasing to exist, while Zelo and Bowling Green kept a foot outside in case Players didn't work out for them. Zelo eventually all but removed the foot they had in Players, as its representatives on Players Board would have to repeatedly implore their fellow Zelos to even come see Players plays.⁴⁰ It is therefore useful to think of Players as the spiritual successor to the University Drama Club, although that is a very simplified take on what was likely a more complex relationship.

⁴⁰ In one of the first mentions of Players in the Zelosophic Society minutes, on October 5, 1936, a Mr. Melbourne "urged the society to continue its dramatic efforts through this membership [in Players]." On March 21, 1938, the minutes said "It was decided that Zelo should become more active in the Pennsylvania Players." On March 28, 1938, the minutes said "Mr. Kamholz again brought in the Penn Players, urging that Zelo express its opinion on policy. Mr. McAllister suggested that Zelo relinquish its right to a member on the board of the players. Others disagreed and a debate ensued, resulting in the formation of a committee, consisting of Messrs. Morris, Lanard, and Rowland, to see Miss Quinn about matters of policy." On October 17, 1938, the minutes said "[Henry Pommer] rallied his waning strength to the cause of the Penn Players and moved that the society attend their next production in a body. He had spent his persuasive powers, however, and the vote resulted in the defeat of the motion." On December 12, 1938, "Mr. Pommer made an impassioned plea for all loyal Zelosophists to buy tickets to "The Royal Family" to be presented by Pennsylvania Players on January 17th and 1th. General interest was not shown."

The Formation

The new organization, first chaired by Robert Schaeffer from Zelo and then Theodore Kirschner from the UDC, hired Kathleen Carberry Quinn as its director, and she stayed with the company, directing most of its plays, until 1967. Ms. Quinn was the daughter of the legendary Arthur Hobson Quinn, Penn professor and dean, American theatre historian, and founding member of the revived Zelosophic Society. Mr. Quinn had taken great care to shepherd Penn's theatre along in the years before Players, and now his daughter became the face of the Penn Players. Their first public activity was taking part in something called The Cultural Olympics, where they presented a play called *Love Comes to Josephus*. This was not a play put up for a large Penn audience. It must have been done in the 1936-37 school year, as a picture of the cast can be found in the 1937 Record. This was the first time a Penn theatre group other than Zelo or Mask and Wig had gotten into the record in three years.⁴¹ According to Zelo's minutes from January 10, 1937, the Players were also preparing a play contest for second semester, making this the first in a long line of student directed collections of one acts which still continue in the present day, under the name of the TAC-e Collaborative One Acts. Players also had its first radio drama on March 12 according to the February 15, 1937 Zelo minutes.

For their first major production, the Players settled on Phillip Barry's *Holiday*, a relatively new play which had been considered as a possibility by Zelo in the years prior. *Holiday* drew hundreds of students interested in acting and behind-the-scenes work. Players

⁴¹ In the 1933 Record, the sections for Dramatics (sometimes called "Drama and Music") disappeared for the first time in decades, but the Zelosophic Society, the Men About Towne Club, Mask and Wig, Glee, and Penn Band all survived on pages spread throughout the yearbook. The University Drama Club and, shockingly, the Philomathean Society disappeared from the yearbook entirely. In 1934, the Drama and Music Section returned, but Philo and the UDC remained missing from the yearbook, now along with the Men About Towne. The 1930s featured a dramatically expanded section on athletics, with individual pages (and sometimes two page spreads) being given to each and every football game of the season. It was shocking to see Philo absent from a yearbook in which it had recently enjoyed more pages than any other club.

quickly became a campus phenomenon, with their first play being advertised in Philadelphia papers and easily selling out. After it opened at the Plays and Players Theater in December 1937, they even took *Holiday* on the road to Atlantic City, a move which would usually be expected only from the ultra-successful Mask and Wig.

Many factors went into this success. For one thing, Players commanded a number of people that no theatre company had been able to muster since *The Masque of American Drama*.⁴² According to the 1940 Women's Record, the Players were the first campus theatre group to receive funding from the University. This is probably not entirely true, considering the University's involvement in earlier productions such as the Masque and the Greek plays. But in the recent past, it was likely true. This connection to the University was cemented in Article III of the original Constitution. "This organization shall be under the supervision of those faculty supervisors of the English Department of the University of Pennsylvania appointed by the Committee on Student Welfare governing undergraduate organizations – which appointments shall be affirmed by the Student Board of Directors of this organization. The faculty supervisors shall have full authority in all matters pertaining to the organization, subject only to the regulations of said Committee on Student Welfare." Although this makes it sound as though the Players Board of Directors had no actual power compared to the English Department and the Committee on Student Welfare, these bodies only supervised, and all day to day activities and decisions were carried out by the students. It is similar to how Players is completely student run today, but if PAC made a demand of Players, the student board would comply (the only other alternative being to leave PAC and its funding).

The original Constitution of the Pennsylvania Players (we have a copy of the final draft which was approved by the Zelosophic Society) stated that the Board of Directors would always have two members from the Zelosophic Society, one from Touchstone, one from Bowling Green, and three from the Pennsylvania Players at large. Within a year, Zelo

⁴² The figure given in several sources for how many students came out for auditions or tech positions is "hundreds," so we'll say at least 200 wanted to be involved or were involved in the production of *Holiday*.

would lose one representative,⁴³ and Touchstone lost theirs as soon as they dissolved as a group in 1938. In the 1942 Constitution, the next one I could find, only Bowling Green still had the right to elect a member of the board, but this right was lost by the 1952 Constitution, which is the last one I have been able to find until the past few decades. This is despite Bowling Green still existing as a group at that point. So by 1952 at the latest, Players Board was completely independent from outside electorates. The original constitution called for two of the non-affiliated board members to be men and the other to be a woman. This would make the original board consist of 4 men and 3 women at all times, although a handwritten note next to this sentence reads “Flexible” in Zelo’s copy of the Constitution. Article VI, on the Chairman of the Board, stipulates that the Chairman must always be a man. The male Chairman policy did not last for too long, because the first woman Chair of the Penn Players was Mildred O. Hill from 1943-45. This probably had something to do with many of the men leaving for War. In order to become a member of Players, a student would have to be voted in by at least six board members. Company members would then be required to work on every single Players production in some capacity, making Players a real company. The Constitution was signed by Edwin A Willard III of Zelo, Elvina S Castle of Bowling Green, Dorris L. Culley of Touchstone, and Bernard H Pelzer Jr. of the UDC. Of that group, only Pelzer was on the first Players Board of Governors the next year. The rest of the first board consisted of Patricia Murray, Helen Keffer, Elizabeth Snyder, Ted Kirschner, and Robert Schaeffer as Chairman.

While the UDC no longer existed and Zelo was no longer doing theatre, Touchstone and Bowling Green did not go away immediately. In a letter by Kathleen C. Quinn, who was now Director of Dramatics for the University, on March 29, 1938, she explains that the women’s theatre groups, in joining Players, “agreed to produce no major productions except as part of that major group, which was given the name of ‘The Pennsylvania Players.’ However, each of the two groups were permitted to retain their original individual identities.”

⁴³ The Zelo minutes from November 8, 1937 mention that the Players constitution was revised, and that Zelo would only have one representative instead of two.

Bowling Green had retaken sole control over the May Day Festival in 1937⁴⁴, and continued to perform a play every year until at least 1958, after which the Record no longer mentions them. Touchstone gave up its public stage performances, but presented one act plays at occasions such as Miss Kratz's Monday Teas, Christmas, and the Pirates' Ball. Quinn's letter says that these performances were given as often as once every two weeks. But based on evidence in the Record, it seems that Touchstone ceased to exist after 1938. Quinn's letter also gives us numbers regarding how many women were involved in these three groups. She says that 200 women were involved in Penn Players in 1938, 80 in the Bowling Green production with 18 active members, and 25 in Touchstone.

Meanwhile, Players followed their first major play with a second evening of one acts in the spring, featuring Eugene O'Neil's *Ile* and three student written one acts called *Seventh Heaven and Hell*, *Dead Letter*, and *Interlude in Eternity*. *Seventh Heaven and Hell* won the competition for best one act. The second mainstage production, also in the spring of 1938, was *High Tor* by Maxwell Anderson, a recent hit which Players received special permission to perform from Anderson himself. Miss Quinn directed this play, and continued to direct every main production of the Players, with students handling the one acts. In the fall of 1938, Players also gave teas with prominent theatrical figures of the day, such as "the Abbey Players" and a character known as "Brother Rat." Players continued broadcasting radio plays, possibly over the same stations that Zelo and the UDC had earlier, or potentially over Penn's station if it existed yet. In 1940, Players did quite a bit more than their usual two professionally directed shows and their one acts competition. They performed an original one act about Penn by Kathleen Quinn and Mr. Paul B. Hartenstein called *Ben Franklin Was His Name* in Irvine Auditorium for Penn's Bicentennial. They performed a series of three one acts every single month in addition to their larger one act play competition, these one acts being professionally written and staged with less hoopla than the student competition. They performed five one acts throughout the school year for special occasions, including experimental one acts for a faculty tea club meeting. This is the first documented instance of experimental

⁴⁴ 1937 Women's Record

theatre at Penn. And following in the footsteps of Zelo and the UDC, they held a class for stagecraft and scenic design. And in 1941, Players hosted speeches on drama throughout the year. Players reigned supreme in the Penn theatre community almost as soon as it was formed, in a way that no other group had ever matched before or would ever match again.

By 1942, the Constitution of the Pennsylvania Players had been almost entirely rewritten by Chairman Sidney Wertimer, Jr. to accommodate the actual functions of the group, which could not have been anticipated in 1936 before they had even put up a single play. The path to membership was no longer arbitrary, and now there was a point system in place to determine eligibility. The actual awarding of points was determined by staff officers (what we would now call designers) and directors, who gave points to their crews. Seniors and juniors became eligible for membership after acquiring 20 points, sophomores became members after 30 points, and freshmen were not eligible. Once eligible, a student could become a member upon receiving a positive vote from at least five members of the Board of Governors. And as mentioned before, Touchstone and Zelo no longer had any representation on the Board, and Bowling Green still had the right to elect one member. According to this constitution, if Bowling Green ever chose to forfeit this right for a year, a third woman from the rest of Players would be elected. The Board still consisted of four men and three women, but this could be overturned for one year at a time by unanimous agreement of the board. This is the natural conclusion of the "Flexible" that was written in pencil on the original Constitution. The requirement that the chair be a man also still was in place, although not for much longer. The Chairman and Vice Chairman were elected by the outgoing and incoming boards, and then the Chair appointed board members to all the other positions, which were Treasurer, Secretary, Publicity Chairman, Business Manager, Social Chairman, and Production Chairman. Dues were set in the constitution at \$1 per semester, which is funny now but would have paid for a lot at the time.

Everything was going great for Players in 1942. It would continue to go great for a long time yet, but it's about time for a chapter break, and World War II serves as a convenient excuse.

World War II

At the end of 1941, the United States of America entered the Second World War. This would hit Penn's campus much harder than did the First World War, and many of Penn's men served overseas. Some of the women served as well. Kathleen Quinn, the director of Players, joined the Navy's WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) program, which allowed women to serve as actual members of the Navy, although not on combat vessels. The program was intended to end as soon as the war did, but women were allowed to remain on for decades afterwards.⁴⁵ Quinn was replaced temporarily by Miss Margaret M. Kearney with Mrs. Louis "Jean" Day as her assistant. In 1946, Miss Catherine Santa Maria, CW'45, took Day's place as assistant director and then Santa Marie directed the Players from 1947-1949.⁴⁶ Quinn returned as director in 1950.

Another casualty of the war was probably the Men About Towne Club. Engineers would have been extremely needed in the war, which probably explains why the MATC disappears from the Record after 1942. The Zelosophic Society, which no longer was involved in theatre, saw its membership plummet during the war, and was unable to recover afterwards, ceasing to exist after 1947. Philo barely survived, with Charles Fine Ludwig as the only member for a time. He is credited with the survival and revival of the society today.

Players had its very first female chair from fall 1943 to spring 1945, Mildred "Midge" Hill. Midge was also the president of Bowling Green, and she canceled the May Day play in 1944 because of the war. The previous year, in 1943, the whole May Day festival was moved to

⁴⁵ My source on what the WAVES are is Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WAVES>). As WWII isn't the topic of this book, I'm going to trust Wikipedia on this one.

⁴⁶ Catherine Santa Maria, more commonly known as "Kaki," would go on to marry Joseph Marshall, W'49, and then return to Penn as Catherine Marshall. The source I was using to write about her in this chapter had her name spelled as "Katherine," and it was only months later, once I'd looked in more detail at Kaki Marshall's career, that I realized they were the same person and that my original source was wrong. I believe that my source was the short and incomplete history of Penn theatre by Mary Ann Meyers, but I foolishly did not make a note of it when I wrote the first draft of this chapter. You'll read more about Kaki in the chapter called "The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts." She is extremely important to Penn's theatre history.

Irvine because of difficulty traveling to Morris due to gas rationing. It was a different campus during war.

One male student who did not go off to war (he appears to have been too young, and the war ended in the middle of his Penn career) was named Harold Prince. Today, Prince is known as the person with more Tony awards than anyone else in history. But in 1945, he won what was likely his first theatrical award ever: the J. Howard Reber Award for Outstanding Actor of the Year. This award was given to a Player every year in the 40s and 50s, and it seemed to only be for performances in the one acts festival. Prince later won the 1947 Arthur Hobson Quinn Plaque for Outstanding Undergraduate Director of the Year, foreshadowing his future directorial success with Stephen Sondheim and Andrew Lloyd Weber (and Jason Robert Brown, with the criminally underrated *Parade*). He was elected Business manager (treasurer) of the Players in 1947, and he was also the president of WXPN, Penn's radio station which frequently broadcast radio plays with Players. As a board member of each group, Prince was the most responsible for the execution these radio plays.

One last thing worth noting from this period is that we still have record of Professor Dolman teaching a Play Production course in the College for Women in the 1945-46 year. And now we move past the war.

Alone at the Top

With WWII over, the Pennsylvania Players were the only company at Penn which consistently produced non-musical theatre throughout each year. Mask and Wig was going strong, as always, and Bowling Green returned to the Morris Arboretum in 1946. The only other two places where theatre occurred on campus between 1943 and 1960 were at Pele Mele, which made it until at least 1950 but likely not any longer, and at Hillel. In 1945, the Record says that Hillel created a committee known as the Hillel Players which was tasked with producing one act plays. The next mention of Hillel theatre in the Record comes from 1949, when the Hillel Show Committee put on a variety show. It is likely that more theatre was done in between and around these two years, but I have seen no proof. These productions

would almost certainly have been unconnected to the general Penn theatre community.

Meanwhile, Players was at its height. The entire Penn theatre community basically was the Pennsylvania Players. From their office in the basement of Irvine Auditorium, the Players had an annual lineup of numerous one acts, two main stage plays in Irvine, classes in scenic design, stagecraft, and makeup, weekly radio plays (on WXPN, WFIL, and WIP), a one-time television broadcast of George Kelley's *The Flattering World* on WPTZ, an annual Christmas pageant with the Choral or A Capella Societies, social events for members, and collaborations with outside organizations, such as the American National Theater and Academy, which was an organization aiming to bring legitimate theatre to the nation.⁴⁷ Through the Academy, two Players were chosen to act in the first combined production of the Philadelphia Experimental Theater in 1949. Players' main plays, still professionally directed by Quinn, Kearney, or Santa Maria, were performed sometimes at the Plays and Players Theater and sometimes in Irvine. In 1947, they took *Joan of Lorraine* on a five day USO tour and got an audience of approximately 35,000 people⁴⁸. In 1950, Kathleen Quinn returned as full time director. And in 1951, Players put on a play by Moss Hart called *Light Up the Sky*, and "light up the sky" remains the Players motto to this day.⁴⁹

The next major chapter in the history of Players began in 1954, when Players performed their first ever musical, Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel*. This production was a collaboration with the Department of Music, and featured the largest company yet for a Players show, 86 dancers, singers, and actors.⁵⁰ The next year, Players did no musical, but in 1956, they performed *Kiss Me Kate*, and in 1957 they performed both *Brigadoon* and *The King and I*. 1958 had four plays and no musical, but they came back in 1959 with *Oklahoma!* and have put on a musical every year since, always in the fall semester.

⁴⁷ 1947 Record

⁴⁸ 1948 Record

⁴⁹ Although it is threatened by the rapid rise of a new (from 2012) Players catchphrase, "Players, we ____." As in, "Players, we fling" or "Players, we graduate" or "Players, we stairs."

⁵⁰ 1955 Record

Over 200 students were involved in 1961's production of *Guys and Dolls*, showing just how important this annual musical was to Penn.

A very notable series of events occurred in 1956 and 1957 which tested Players' commitment to producing challenging theatre regardless of the current political landscape. In the 1950s, Senator Joseph McCarthy led the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) on a sort of witch-hunt against Americans with real or perceived socialist or communist views. Many people were blacklisted from the entertainment industry because of these hearings, and one person who narrowly escaped the blacklist was Arthur Miller, the acclaimed playwright of *Death of a Salesman* and *The Crucible*. The director of the stage version of *Death of a Salesman*, Elia Kazan, was a former Communist who ratted out eight other members of the Communist Party with Broadway careers in 1952. Miller attempted to talk Kazan out of testifying, but when Kazan would not, their friendship ended. *The Crucible*, which opened in 1953, was about the Salem witch trials, but was very openly an anti-HUAC play. Because of this, Miller himself fell into the crosshairs of the HUAC and was even denied a passport to the London opening of *The Crucible* in 1954. Despite this, he was never blacklisted, and continued to have a fairly successful career. He even was married to Marilyn Monroe for a few years.

In 1956, a group of students in Penn Players decided that they wanted to put on *Death of a Salesman*. The students were not doing it to make a statement about the HUAC, they just wanted to put up this recent Broadway play that everyone was buzzing about. *Death of a Salesman* is often seen as the quintessential American tragedy, and its reputation was cemented extremely quickly. But Miss Quinn would not allow Players to put up a show by Arthur Miller. Her stated reason was that "any theatrical group which wished to live should not put on a controversial show, and Arthur Miller was certainly controversial."⁵¹ Record of her own political views has not survived to the present day. But some students, including Kay Van Tress CW'57 and Charlotte Shivvers CW'57 (the two of whom informed me about this for the first time over email) decided not to take no for an answer. These students went ahead and produced the show anyway, on a small budget

⁵¹ *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, March 5, 1957

compared to what Players was capable of doing, under the name The Playmakers. The Playmakers had no intention of creating a rival group, but merely wanted to show that there was a place on campus for Arthur Miller, and that they were not afraid of any political consequences.

The next year, following the success of *Death of a Salesman*, the same students pushed for Players to do *The Crucible*, this time more directly as a protest against censorship and the HUAC. The students moved cautiously, suggesting that they stage the play as a closed workshop, and only after it had been seen by the school's Advisory Board would a decision be made on whether or not to open it up for viewing to the general public. Quinn was unmoved, however, and maintained that she would never under any circumstances consent to the play being opened. If she were to never change her mind, Players would have to go to the Committee on Student Affairs to overrule her. Hoping that events would resolve themselves, Players went ahead on the show without their director, this time not bothering with a false name. The Board of Governors under Chairman Ronald Lowden took responsibility for the production, and student William Harkins directed in the absence of Quinn's involvement. At the start of March, 1957, the show was ready for performance, and the closed staging was given in front of an audience which consisted of the Board of Governors of Players, Quinn, and the Advisory Board. Robert H. Pitt, II, dean of admissions and member of the Advisory Board, said that the play was "too good not to be seen by the whole University" and that "it was a first rate job."⁵² In response to the unanimous approval of the Advisory Board, several DP editorials in favor of the production, and even coverage from the Philadelphia Inquirer, Quinn finally changed her mind and consented to the production being opened. The open production was given on March 15, 1957 in the Museum Auditorium. According to Von Tress, there were some very hard feelings on both sides of the issue at the time. But relations returned to normal for Quinn and the students soon after this, and she remained the Players director for another ten years.

There is not much else to say about Players in the next decade. They simply did very well and put on many plays, musicals, and one acts (now called the Howard Reber Memorial Contest). They

⁵² DP, March 5, 1957

occasionally traveled to nearby cities and colleges to perform their theatre⁵³, but not much else out of the ordinary occurred. The 1966 Record calls the Players the largest coed group on campus, and there is no reason to doubt this assessment. Players was doing just fine in the Sixties, even when Kathleen Quinn resigned in 1967.⁵⁴ Before long, Players would have to face real competition for the first time. But before we get there, let's look back on some developments outside Players in the Fifties and Sixties.

The Players get Competition: The Drama Guild

We have already seen that the only three theatre groups to survive WWII were Mask and Wig, Players, and Bowling Green, plus the occasional venture into theatre by Hillel. It is also worth noting that Pêle Mêle continued as an annual tradition until at least 1950, when the junior class for women put on a play called *Afghanistana, Pretty Soon*. This was the last time Pêle Mêle would be mentioned in the Women's Record. By this time, Bowling Green's May Day play had developed a new annual tradition in which a man named Guy Marriner (who was affiliated with the university) narrated all the May Day plays in his distinctive low voice. Bowling Green also may have had a small expansion in their dramatic activities around this time (it is likely that they were now unconnected to Players and therefore no longer bound by its Constitution to only performing at May Day). In 1955, they added to their usual schedule a play called *The Littlest Angel* to be performed at Dr. Hottel's⁵⁵ Christmas Tea. 1958 was the last time Bowling Green appeared in the Record, under President Lois Geary. She and P. Lanier, another Bowling Green member, are the first African-Americans I observed in any Penn theatre group's yearbook page, making them possible candidates for the first black members of the Penn theatre community. It is likely there were others earlier whom

53 They performed *Caesar and Cleopatra* at Penn and the Yale Drama Festival in 1961, and they performed for the American Association of University Women, the Chancel Drama Cycle of the Episcopal Church, and the Philadelphia Arts Alliance in 1964

54 This resignation date is based on information in Mary Ann Meyers' incomplete and unreliable history of Penn theatre.

55 Don't know him.

I missed, but Geary and Lanier do deserve special note. Geary was very likely the first black leader in the Penn theatre company. Meanwhile, Mask and Wig used blackface in their 1954 show, but this may have been the final time they did so, putting an end to their proud tradition of minstrelsy once and for all. While Bowling Green was fading away, a new co-ed theatre group arose for the first time since Players was founded. This new challenger to Players was created in the spring of 1960.

It began with a familiar face, the Philomathean Society. In the 1957-58 school year, Philo returned to the stage for the first time since 1934 with a three act verse comedy called *The Lady's Not for Burning* by Christopher Fry. Philo seems to have bounced back from the WWII era, when Charles Fine Ludwig was literally the only member of the society for a time. In 1959, they even had a picture in the Record for the first time since the 1930s, and now there were women in the Society. Based on the fourth floor of the Hare Building⁵⁶ instead of their traditional College Hall rooms, which they would eventually reclaim, Philo decided to go back into theatre on an annual basis. On March 14 and 15, 1959, Philo presented Albert Camus' *The Misunderstanding* in the Museum Auditorium. Siiri Woodward starred as Martha. Siiri later moved to San Francisco under the name Michael Elliot, having previously come out as transgender. Moderator Murray Eisenberg, in a March 9 letter to faculty members, said that Philo "takes great pleasure in announcing its return to full-scale dramatic productions." He also wrote that the cast included several members of the Pennsylvania Players.

But Philo decided that they would not be capable of running a high quality theatre company in addition to their other activities, so they spun out a new group. This group was called The Drama Guild, and it was formed "to present serious drama, contemporary, classical and experimental, to the University of Pennsylvania community."⁵⁷

⁵⁶ The Robert Hare Medical and Dental Library stood on the northeast corner of 36th and Locust from 1878-1869, at which point it was demolished and replaced with Williams Hall, which still stands.

⁵⁷ This information comes from the program of *Lysistrata*, as well as from a pamphlet distributed by the group to advertise their 60-61 season. They ran on a subscription-based model, trying to get money up front from anyone who wanted to see all three of their shows.

This was a similar mission statement to that of Players, which had since moved into producing musicals, a much more popular and lucrative form than the non-musical drama. Philo's moderator, Nicholas Capaldi, wrote in a letter to faculty:

At present the Society feels that there is a real need on campus for dramatic productions of a serious and stimulating nature. Accordingly the Society has founded a new dramatic organisation, the Drama Guild.

The Drama Guild will undertake to produce experimental, classical, and contemporary drama of both published and unpublished dramatists. The organisation will attempt to give the student body dramatic offerings that have been lacking on campus in the past. It will serve a purpose not being fulfilled by any campus group.

The new organization will be governed by both male and female undergraduates with Gerald C. Weales, assistant professor of English, serving in advisory capacity. Participation in the productions of the Guild is open to all full time undergraduates.

The group was led by Sanford Lewis Smith, W'61, who was the Chairman for the first two years. Smith had formerly been on the board of the Penn Players and had stage managed many Players shows (*Anastasia*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Browning Version*, and *Kismet*), and I wonder if there was any bad blood between him and Players. This reading of events is supported by a sentence in the Guild's pamphlet:

A group of university undergraduates was seriously concerned with what they felt to be a dearth of dramatic presentations suitable to an academically motivated institution such as the University of Pennsylvania. They were of the opinion that the drama is as much a part of an education as art or music and therefore serious drama, that being drama which would stimulate and nurture discussion and intellectual thought, should be a part of the University of Pennsylvania's broad educational and cultural program.

This passive-aggressive manifesto seems to be a direct attack on the perceived drifting of Players away from serious theatre. The letter by Capaldi which I transcribed above gives a similar impression, outright saying “It will serve a purpose not being fulfilled by any campus group.” There is another jab from Philo in the Drama Guild pamphlet, where they say that “in the opinion of the Society—it had been a very lean year for anyone interested in drama at the University.” This presumably is also an attack on Players.⁵⁸

Their first play was *Endgame* by Samuel Beckett, which they produced in spring 1960. This was enough of a success that the University administration gave “full recognition” to the Drama Guild, which could possibly mean funding. The next plays were *Lysistrata* in November 1961 and *No Exit* in December 1961. Their 1960-61 season ended in March with *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*. The Guild also had professional directors, with Dr. Gerald Weales of the English Department directing *Endgame* and *Simpleton*, Peter Bauland (an alum) directing *Lysistrata*, and Ruth Larkin directing *No Exit*. The Drama Guild also sponsored weekly viewings of “Outstanding Motion Pictures” on Wednesdays at the Bennett Union for 50 cents. Like Players, the Guild was run by a student board of governors and a student production staff with a professional director. Students could work on individual shows without making any commitment to the company, which seems to also have been the case for Players at this point, even though Players also had a membership program.

The pamphlet for their 1961-1962 season featured Jean Anouilh’s *Rind Around the Moon* in November, an evening of one act plays in December, and Edwin Justus Mayer’s *Children of Darkness* in March. They also aired ten films from around the world, with France and England being the only countries to have two films on the list. Miss Leslie Leibensperger was now in charge of the Guild, and Dr. James Devlin of the English Department advised the three person Board of Governors. This pamphlet mentions that all Drama Guild plays were put up in the Houston Hall Auditorium, a 200-seater which would become the go-to place to put up plays at Penn as time went forward.

⁵⁸ It is fitting that this upstart little group would attack Penn’s most professional theatre company in a thoroughly unprofessional way.

The Drama Guild eventually imitated its great enemy and incorporated music and dance into their productions. Leibensperger, now a senior in the College of Liberal Arts for Women, produced a version of Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Flies* in October and November 1962 with an original musical score by David Steinbrook, C'63, and dances by Wilma Korr, W'64. The director, Mrs. Deborah Toth, was associated with the Neighborhood Players. Their 1963 February play was *Playboy of the Western World*, and they performed *All the King's Men* in October 1963. All profits from this latter play went to the Campus Chest, which was a huge charity drive Penn had every year in the Sixties and into the Seventies. In 1964, the Drama Guild expanded into radio plays on the campus station, WXPN, and they also began workshop productions of student plays. Things were not all peachy, however. Also in the 1964 Record, there is mention that "one performance was canceled this year because of directing difficulties. This surprising admission gives us some insight into what was likely a declining group, and the 1965 Record does not mention the Drama Guild, despite a good yearbook showing over the previous few years. My personal hypothesis is that Players already had the market for theatre at Penn saturated (they were using hundreds of students, after all) and the only reason that the Drama Guild was ever founded is that Sanford Smith and some other Philos became disenchanted with Players and felt compelled to form a rival group. Once this initial set of students had graduated and the anti-Players fervor had died down, the Drama Guild was simply unable to compete with the resources and prestige of the Pennsylvania Players. To sum up the Drama Guild, they seemed to be a smaller company than Players, more focused on serious drama and more connected to the English Department and the Philomathean Society. Especially when considering their international film selections, it seems that they were going for a more refined, scholarly approach to theatre. But it did not last, and the years from 1965-1968 only saw two theatre groups on campus: Mask and Wig and the Pennsylvania Players, making this the first time since 1902 that only two student theatre groups existed on campus.⁵⁹ This would soon

⁵⁹ Prior to 1900, Mask and Wig was the only theatre group on campus. Le Cercle Francais made two from 1900-1902, and the Priestly Chemical Society was the third in 1903, which also featured a Greek play.

change, however, and from 1969 onwards, the number of theatre groups would expand at an increasingly rapid rate, bringing an end to the Age of Players.

Glee for Men and Women

But the Age of Players isn't over yet! We still have two more groups to talk about outside of Players before we wrap up their reign. While everything in the previous chapters was happening, the Penn Glee Club continued to be one of the two most successful, long-lived, and prestigious groups on campus along with Mask and Wig. The Glee Club was not a theatrical group, and their performances were almost entirely vocal. Glee was started in 1862 by eight undergraduate men, with John C. Simms credited by some as the founder.⁶⁰ Another eight men were added to the group before their first performance in the chapel of Collegiate Hall at the old campus at Ninth and Chestnut Streets. The Glee Club website's history page⁶¹ says that the house was filled with "an audience that was unusually select and large, the Hall filled to its utmost capacity." Glee does not attribute that quote to anyone or anything, so neither will I. The men wore red and blue ribbons in their buttonholes, thus making them the first known University group to wear the Penn colors as part of their uniform. Glee was also the first performing arts group at the University, as all earlier

⁶⁰ The archivist of Glee, Charlie McClelland, C'15, told me that Simms is the founder, but the only publication that I could find which lists him as the single founder of Glee is a DP article from December 9, 1993 called "LIFESTYLE: The Century Club," which can be found at this internet link as of 2014: http://www.thedp.com/article/1993/12/lifestyle_the_century_club McClelland also said that Simms would go on to found the Orpheus Club of Philadelphia in 1972. The Orpheus Club is the oldest all-male singing club in the United States. I found evidence that Simms was the first president of the Orpheus Club in an online program for their February 25, 2009 concert "For the Love of Monty," which incidentally was a tribute to the Glee Club's own Bruce Montgomery. The Penn Archives has a biography page for Simms on its site, and this page only lists him as a secretary and treasurer of the Glee Club, but does credit him with being the driving force behind Class Day, an old tradition which eventually merged with other traditions to bring about Hey Day in 1931. Class Day was where the Bowl, Spoon, and Cane were given out originally.

⁶¹ <http://www.dolphin.upenn.edu/gleeclub/history.shtml>

performance endeavors, such as the Masque of Alfred, were done as part of the curriculum and not by student groups. Glee was a hit, and like Mask and Wig a few decades later, it became such an integral part of Penn's self-conception that it is impossible to imagine Penn without the Glee Club. Glee performed at many official Penn events in addition to its own concerts. Glee also contributed the song "The Red and Blue" to Penn, thus rendering our actual alma mater and fight song completely unknown and irrelevant.

But none of that is theatre, which is the topic of our book. Glee did eventually expand its operations into the theatrical realm, however, in 1928. H. Alexander Matthews, the director of Glee at the time, wrote an original production called *Hades, Inc.* Glee productions consist of existing songs which are wrapped in an original plot, and it appears that this was the case even in the original 1928 production. Some original works by Glee members and directors do find their way into Glee shows, and it is therefore possible that this original production partially or entirely original. In the 1930 Women's Record, the section for the Women's Glee Club contains a portion which mentions the Men's Glee Club: "In the Spring the [Women's Glee] Club combined with the Men's Glee Club, under the direction of the eminent Dr. H. Alexander Matthews, to give the inimitable Gilbert and Sullivan Operetta, "The Pirates of Penzance." This was the third opera produced by the combined clubs, and as before, this one was most heartily received and afforded great enjoyment to both performers and audience." If this is true, and there is no reason to believe that it is not, then *Hades, Inc.* may also have included women, despite Glee leaving that detail out of its own account of the musical. Either way, it seems that neither Men's nor Women's Glee performed another stage show after this, with both groups returning to solely vocal fare.

It was not until 1969 that Glee returned to the world of theatre with their show *Handel with Hair*. Ever since then, there has been a fully staged musical by Glee every single year in the spring, with a more traditional vocal concert in the fall. Glee's focus in the musical is not on high quality and emotional acting, but rather on high quality choral singing, goofy plots, and the sight of fifty or so men doing simple choreography. If that sounds like a less than ringing endorsement, I don't intend it in that way. I have found that Glee shows are extremely fun to go see as long as you don't expect a Broadway-

style musical. The Glee Club was the home of Bruce Montgomery, who was the director from 1956-2000. C. Erik Nordgren, a former member of the Club, has been the director since 2000.

A Women's Glee Club also existed on and off from the 1910's until the 50s which was vocal in nature. Women's Glee appeared in the 1953 Record after a long absence, but then only a Women's Choral Society appeared from 1954-1957. This Society wore similar robes to those worn by the 1953 Women's Glee Club, so it is possible that these groups were one and the same. But there was no group calling themselves the Women's Glee Club in the first half of 1957, because in the fall of that year, a brand new organization appeared claiming that name. This new Women's Glee Club made their debut at an event called "Pledges on Parade," presumably involving sorority pledges. By 1959 The WGC had 25 members and performed at events such as the Dean's Christmas Party. In 1960, the WGC changed its name to the Pennsingers, and they performed at many more campus events, including at a joint concert with the Glee Club. They also had matching white blazers emblazoned with Penn's shield and black knee-length skirts. They were under the direction of students Merle Moss (one of the co-founders of the group along with Edie Herman⁶²) and Cecilia Curry, but they had plans to switch to professional guidance in the future. This guidance came in the form of Earnest Wells in 1961. As time passed, the Pennsingers performed many more times per year, becoming nearly as successful as the men's Glee Club. Sometimes they even performed with other men's glee clubs from different colleges. They also added several other matching outfits, such as floor length sleeveless white gowns and black blazers. In 1964, Earnest Wells was replaced by George Gansz as director, and their Record entry mentions that the Singers were "now a member of the Performing Arts Council." A picture of the 1965 Performing Arts Council, consisting of five students of both genders, could be found in the next Record with no explanatory text.⁶³ Also in 1964, the Pennsingers founded a small group within their ranks called the Penn Pals, which they say "seems to

⁶² Penn Singers website's history page

⁶³ This is highly significant in that PAC supposedly was invented from scratch in the 1980s. PAC will be discussed later at length in its own chapter.

have some exciting possibilities.” I cannot determine what this group is, but perhaps it is a small a capella group like what the Penn Pipers are to Glee.

By 1967, E. Dennis Rittenhouse was the director of the Pennsyngers, and they now had 80 members. Their style options were at an all-time height: “In addition to expanding its performing range, the Pennsyngers expanded their wardrobe with the addition of the official red Pennsynger night shirt to their long white brocade gowns and the white blazers embellished with the club emblem.”⁶⁴ It should be noted that the club emblem has not changed since then, and is put on Penn Singers clothing to this day.⁶⁵ In 1968, Pennsyngers and Glee established a new group called the Penndings, which was a mixture of the two. In 1970, Pennsyngers was under the leadership of Susan Dash. The next year, in 1971, there is a picture of the group, still all women, being directed by a man, and they are referred to as the Pennsylvania Singers. This man is Bruce Montgomery, and the effect he had on this group was revolutionary.

Bruce Montgomery was a monumental campus figure who directed the Glee Club, Mask and Wig, Singers, several Players musicals, and was the head of Student Performing Arts at Penn in 1957 when the Women’s Glee Club was founded (if the Singers website is to be believed, and I’m not certain that it can). He did a fair bit of composing and arranging in his time, and his pieces are still sung by the Glee club every year to this day. In 1970, Monty wrote a piece called “Herodotus Fragments” for orchestra and two choruses. The Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra premiered it with the help of the Penn Glee Club and the Pennsyngers. Then in 1971, Monty personally became the director of the Pennsyngers and convinced them to become a coed ensemble called the Penn Singers. I am not sure why they made this shift, but Monty is said to have had great charisma, and the ‘syngers must have so enjoyed working with him on that concert that they were able to be persuaded. In 1972, the Penn Singers performed their first production of a theatrical nature. The show was in two acts.

⁶⁴ 1968 Record

⁶⁵ I have a deep V-neck t-shirt with that logo, but I’ve never worn it because it was not designed with persons of my type in mind. I’ve been looking for someone to give it to for four years, but I keep forgetting, so it’s still at the bottom of my t-shirt drawer.

The first consisted of the *Buxtehude Missa Brevis*, *Schubert's Mass in G*, and five pieces from Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Jesus Christ Superstar*. The second act was a full production of the one-act Gilbert and Sullivan light opera, *Trial By Jury*. The performance sold out, and Singers decided to focus on theatrical production in the future. In an event recounted on their website, the Singers held a vote after this first show about what direction to take the company in. Do they perform more vocal pieces like the Schubert, Broadway musicals like *JCS*, or light operas? By unanimous vote (which sounds a bit legendary), the Singers chose light opera. Their next performance, in spring 1973, was *Pirates of Penzance* in the Zellerbach Theatre at the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, which was also a great success, and from that point there was no turning back.

From 1972 to today, they have performed a Gilbert and Sullivan light opera every single year, with the exceptions of 1996 and 2006, when they performed Monty's *Spindrift*, a musical he had written in the early 1960s which was performed in 1963 by the Pennsylvania Players. In fall 1982, Penn Singers branched out from light opera with "A Night at the Opera" involving a showing of the Marx Brothers film of that name. This may have just been a Singers-sponsored showing of the film in the Museum Auditorium, or they may have given a performance. In fall 1986, Singers had an event called "Red Hot & Cole," advertised on the poster as "A delightful evening of music by Cole Porter." They continued to have revues/film showings in the next few falls, with an Irving Berlin revue and showing of *Top Hat* scenes in 1987, a 30's/40's revue called "Radio Days" in 1988, and a Broadway revue called "Broadway Rhythm" in 1989. 1990 had a Disney revue (premature, considering that the Renaissance hadn't happened yet), 1991 had a Hollywood revue, and more followed. 1994 seems to have been the first time that the fall musical was a preexisting show, when Singers performed Victor Herbert's *Babes in Toyland*. This wasn't straying too far from their roots, as it was also a light opera. They followed this the next two falls with *Anything Goes* and *Brigadoon*, but in 1997 and 1998 they returned to revue with *Nightmare on Walnut Street* and *Love...And Other Natural Disasters*. In 1999, with *Once Upon a Mattress*, Singers settled on doing one Broadway-style musical every fall and one Gilbert and Sullivan light opera every spring.

The Age of SAC

The Student Activities Council

In the late Sixties and early Seventies, the Drama Guild had fallen, and Wig, Pennsingers, and Glee were all targeting different audiences than those who wanted to perform existing plays and musicals. The only group that offered coed theatre besides Players was Singers starting in 1972, and that was only if you wanted to be in a Gilbert and Sullivan light opera. For all intents and purposes, the Pennsylvania Players were the Penn theatre community. Actors and techies alike had Players as their only option. But Players filled the demand by putting on a huge amount of theatre for a huge amount of students. Even student directors were able to participate through the smaller workshops and one acts that Players offered. Still, there was room for another group to come in and disrupt this monopoly, if only that group could survive long enough to become established on campus, which the Drama Guild had been unable to do. Enter SAC.

In 1968, a new body called the Student Activities Council was created. This group likely had some authority over student groups, but it was not responsible for allocating money to the groups, and so its power was limited. Around 1970, there was pressure on the University to increase tuition due to the rising costs of running an expanding university.⁶⁶ There were also complaints from students and parents about the rising tuition costs, however, and the University wanted at least a temporary solution to get more money without angering the students. So the University instituted a new “student activities fee,” promising that students themselves would determine how these funds were spent. The Executive Board of SAC created a new branch of student government in 1972 called the Undergraduate Assembly (now thought of as the main branch of student government, despite its origins from SAC). Before this, various branches of Penn, such as academic departments, would directly hand out money to some student groups. Now, the UA was responsible for this new source of income, the

⁶⁶ This information all comes from interviews with Fran Walker, the Director of Student Life from 1975-2010, and Cary Mazer, professor in the Theatre Arts Program

student activities fee, and they allocated it to SAC, who then had complete authority over how the money should be spent. SAC would decide whether or not to officially recognize student groups and extend them funding, and they would decide how much funding each group received. This incentivized the formation of new groups, so long as each group could explain why they were different from all the other groups in SAC. With all this new money in the pot, student groups appeared in abundance. From the Seventies until the SAC moratorium of 2012, there has been no abating in the constant addition of new students groups. In the theatre world specifically, the period of 1973-1990 saw a rapid increase in the number of student theatre groups. A huge milestone in that period is the creation and/or expansion of the Performing Arts Council (PAC) around 1985, which put a layer of authority in between SAC and the performing arts groups. I put the end date for the Age of SAC at 1992, however, because at that point the theatre community seemed to finally stabilize after an entire Age of growth, and from 1992 to today, the community has been relatively unchanging. But first, we have plenty to cover in this fourth age. During it, we go from a theatre community which essentially is the Pennsylvania Players to a community where Players is one of many players who are equal in the eyes of the University.

Quadramics

In 1973, a freshman named Bart Shachnow arrived at Penn. According to an account by Joseph Sayegh, C'74, on the old Quadramics website, Shachnow came up with the idea to have a student-directed theatre group based in the Quad. The story goes that Shachnow was in line at the Stouffer dining hall one day (there used to be a dining hall in the area where Stouffer College House, Platt, and Beijing are in 2014⁶⁷) and ran into a sophomore named Ron Dagavarian.⁶⁸ He had seen Dagavarian in a show, presumably with

⁶⁷ Sayegh notes, "At that time Stouffer Hall (now offices) was the cafeteria next to the Quad where all the Quad kids ate on the meal plan. (This further gave the Quad students their own identity--eat together, live together--and really separated them out from the rest of campus.)"

⁶⁸ Dagavarian later found success under the name Ron Darian, with which he was a producer and writer for the television show *7th Heaven*.

Players, and suggested that Dagavarian play a part in a play called *Don't Drink the Water* which Shachnow wanted to produce. Dagavarian agreed, and the two of them now set off together to make the first Quadramics play. They had to perform it in the second floor of College Hall (today's Class of 1949 Auditorium) because there was no suitable space to perform a play in the Quad. Sayegh does claim that all the Quadramics members lived in the quad, though.

Quadramics' second play, Peter Schaffer's *Black Comedy*, was directed by Ron Dagavarian and put up around Spring Fling in 1974, a tradition which would prove integral to Quadramics' image in the years going forward. Sayegh played the role of Harold in this play, which is how he has access to this information. In the spring of 1976, probably during Fling, Quadramics presented *Godspell*, their first ever musical. Quadramics has performed a musical every Fling since then. Beginning with *The Rocky Horror Show* in Fling 2005,⁶⁹ Q (this is the name they often go by) has given one performance of the musical at midnight on Friday, and it is customary for the audience to arrive already drunk. This midnight performance is the centerpiece of Quadramics' year, and has been so for ten years. But even before the midnight show became a tradition, the Fling Musical was still Quadramics' most anticipated show.

At some point, which I wish I were more able to pinpoint exactly, Quadramics began billing their fall plays as "dark comedies." It is entirely possible that this began with their second ever play, which was actually called *Black Comedy*. The only other performance which Q is involved in besides their dark comedy and their Fling musical is the Collaborative One Acts. Beginning in the late Seventies or early Eighties, the Pennsylvania Players invited Quadramics to join them in producing the annual winter one acts. This was a momentous occasion in the history of Penn theatre, because Players was essentially admitting that Quadramics was a valuable member of the theatre community worthy of collaborating with. Players would have still had more cachet at the time, but they still decided that having Q's help was worth more than keeping the one-acts exclusive to Players. This was very different from the bitter rivalry between Players and the Drama Guild that likely drove the Drama Guild out of existence. Once the one acts became the

⁶⁹ Or so I have heard

Collaborative One Acts, Players and Q would extend positions on One Acts Board to theatre groups they deemed to be responsible and stable. iNtuitions and Arts House would be the next two groups to join the One Acts, and eventually the groups would be determined based on TAC-e membership, as the show became the winter TAC-e One Acts.

Returning to Quadramics, the moment when they first were invited to collaborate was so significant because they and Players were essentially redefining the Penn theatre community. Players itself used to basically be the community, with a few other groups like Wig and Singers containing largely separate bodies of students. Quadramics disrupted that community, and Players soon recognized this and welcomed Q into a new community that consisted of the two groups. From that point on, the central, interconnected Penn theatre community consisted of those groups which would eventually join TAC-e (and perhaps also Penn Singers). With Quadramics now arguably an equal to Players, the Age of Players was definitively over, and there was no longer any giant, monopolizing group to discourage students from creating their own new theatre groups. The flow of money from SAC was the final straw that broke Players' monopoly.

The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts

Before we go any further, we should look at an important new venue which was built at Penn around this time. The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts not only housed student performances, but it showed a willingness by Penn to take the performing arts seriously, even if that willingness was somewhat reluctant. Until 1971, the only venues where Penn theatre could be performed were Irvine Auditorium (a cavernous hall which hardly any group could fill), the Museum Auditorium (a similar space, but smaller and less tech-friendly), and Houston Hall's Auditorium (a space which was not designed for modern theatre and which was too small for most musicals). In 1965, at the behest of student groups, the powers that be at Penn⁷⁰ decided to

⁷⁰ It is actually very hard to point to any "powers that be" at Penn. While the President is in charge, and everyone ultimately reports to her/him, all of the various schools and elements of the university operate independently and with their own budgets. So any student group using a theatre in Annenberg has to pay Annenberg, even though the money technically belongs to "the University"

erect a building which would contain multiple performance spaces. Penn also wanted the building to host professional performances and bring more prestige to the University. A committee was created to plan the new building and its activities, but eventually this committee was disbanded when Walter Annenberg stepped in. Annenberg had just made a massive donation to Penn to pay for a new School of Communications which would bear his name, and he offered to pay for the new performing arts building if it was a part of his school. The Annenberg School of Communications had nothing much to do with operating a performing arts building, but the University wasn't in a position to ask questions. They took the money and ran with it. With the disbanding of the committee, there was no student, faculty, or administrative presence in the planning of the building.

The idea was that the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts would have its own repertory theatre companies which would fill the season with their work. Two such companies were there for the first two years of the building, beginning with its opening in 1971. One company was run by the wife of the dean of the Annenberg School, which kept the School and the Center at least slightly connected for a time. But soon the artistic director of the Center left the position, and the building came into trouble when the entire University experienced a financial crisis. In the middle of the 1970s, the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts was shut down along with several other facilities in order to save money. But Annenberg was saved after a student sit-in and demonstrations that sound like they came out of a feel-good Nineties movie.

The revived Annenberg Center was no longer connected with the Annenberg School of Communications or Walter Annenberg, so from this point on when I say "Annenberg," I am referring to the theater building. Annenberg now became a division of the Provost's office, with an independent board of directors who answered to no one other than reporting their bottom line to the Provost. Steve Goff, a former Mask and Wigger, was the managing director of Annenberg,

the entire time. This can sometimes lead to ridiculous situations such as PAC groups being punished for being in debt because they haven't been given their promised budgets by SAC in time to pay Annenberg. But from an outside perspective, no one is really in debt, because the money involved belongs to Penn the entire time, and the only issue at hand is internal bookkeeping delays.

and he tried to turn the fortunes of the Center around. His success was mixed, ultimately, as running a theatre building was not an enviable task in the tough economic times of the late 1970s. His replacement was Catherine “Kaki” Marshall, a very popular figure who had the title Advisor for Student Performing Arts and Manager of Annenberg. Kaki graduated from Penn in 1945, having been a member of the Penn Players, and she went on to be the director of the group in the years after her graduation (you may recall her from the WWII chapter, when she was named Catherine Santa Maria). She then got a master’s degree in theatre at Columbia University, married her Penn sweetheart, and eventually came back to work at Penn in 1976. In addition to her Annenberg duties, she also taught for the Theatre Arts Program. In 1984, she started Annenberg’s Philadelphia International Children’s Festival, which just had its 30th anniversary in 2014. Upon stepping down from her Annenberg duties in the 1990s, Kathryn Helene took the position, now reduced to merely being the advisor for student performing arts. This position is the one that was eventually held by Carolyn Noone, Ty Furman, and Laurie McCall.

Without the Annenberg Center, the boom in performing arts groups could not possibly have happened. There simply were not enough performance spaces in 1970 to accommodate all the PAC groups that exist today (well, there aren’t enough performance spaces *today* to accommodate all the PAC groups that exist today...). The cozy Bruce Montgomery Theatre (formerly the Studio Theatre) seats a bit over 100, and is the home of almost all Theatre Arts Program plays and several TAC-e plays. The Harold Prince Theatre, seating over 200, is the home of every single Penn Players show, play or musical, many Penn Singers and TAC-e shows, and around half of Penn’s dance shows, plus some a capella performances, especially when the a capella groups have to space share with a dance or theatre group for the weekend. The Prince is one of the only two spaces on campus where dance groups can perform, the other being the Iron Gate Theatre, a former church which Penn bought in the mid-1990s. The massive Zellerbach Theatre, seating around 700, usually only has performances by professional companies, but the Glee Club spring show and the Penn Singers spring Gilbert and Sullivan operetta are always guaranteed use of the Zell due to deals cut by Bruce Montgomery while he still ran the two groups. There are various “deals” of questionable firmness that

govern which groups get which spaces. Besides the aforementioned deal for the Zell, Penn Players always has the Prince, and the Theatre Arts Program always has the Monty. But none of this is quite contractual, and there's the constant fear, among Players at least, that "they'll take it away from us."⁷¹ Whenever students don't have the theatres, professional groups do, and a history of Annenberg itself would include much more about all the successes they have had on this front. But as this is a history of student theatre at Penn, I chose to focus only on Annenberg's effect on students. Also of note is that working in the Annenberg box office is a popular job for many students involved in Penn theatre, and I would almost always see a friendly face when I went to buy tickets to a show.⁷²

Graduate School Theatre

In addition to the undergraduate schools, Penn also has multiple graduate schools, and while grad students tend to be busier and have less need for extracurricular activities, some do like to participate in clubs. Two grad schools, Wharton Business School and the Law School, have been performing theatre for decades. For every year since 1977, Wharton has produced an original musical called the Wharton Follies. In order to understand how the Wharton Follies came

⁷¹ Now, I've always thought that Players should do its spring plays in the Monty while keeping the musicals in the Prince, because the sort of plays we do and the audiences we get are just too small for the Prince, whereas the Prince is the perfect size for our musicals. But we fear with if we give up the Prince for even one semester, they'll never give it to us again. Or at least other Players board members and chairs have thought so. I was totally willing to turn "springs in the Monty" into my big Players Chair Goal, but it turns out that you can't even request the Monty on the official PAC space selection form. I might have been able to email PAC Exec directly to ask, but I decided it wasn't worth trying that when my board wouldn't have been on my side anyway. Alas. There will be many more years of Players doing a small, six person show with an audience of seven people in the Prince.

⁷² For more on Annenberg's early years, read the dissertation on the subject by Michael Terrence Sheehan. It can be found in the Penn library, and here is its link on the online catalog as of now:
(http://franklin.library.upenn.edu/record.html?q=%28annenberg%20AND%20center%29%20AND%20thesis%20AND%20%28american%20AND%20civilization%29&qt=dla-advanced&id=FRANKLIN_947735&)

about, you have to know about a grad student named Charlie Seymour Jr.⁷³

Seymour graduated from Wharton Graduate School in 1975, having left behind him a series of musicals and the seeds of the Wharton Follies. While Seymour arrived at Penn expecting to specialize in real estate, he changed his mind when Assistant Dean Thomas F. Schutte came up with the idea for a program in arts administration, management, and marketing. Seymour, who came from a family of theatre practitioners at the Players Club of Swarthmore in Swarthmore, PA, jumped at the chance to be the first graduate of this program. The Pennsylvania Players were still the main theatre group on campus, so Seymour saw them as the group best positioned to help him create theatre on campus. Seymour created a new association called Wharton and the Arts to put on productions, both with and without the Penn Players. There were about ten to twelve students in the program, according to Seymour. In the early months of 1974, Seymour directed *The Fantasticks* with Players, which was quickly followed by a solo venture of Wharton and the Arts, a musical called *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris*, which was performed in the International House. This production was aided by several students from Tufts, who were at Penn when Tufts closed down for six weeks due to the difficulty of paying for heating during the 1973 Energy Crisis.

Seymour's next contribution to Penn theatre was as the director of *The Diary of Adam and Eve*, one third of a three act musical called *The Apple Tree* and written by Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick. This was done on September 4, 1974 in Houston Hall as a part of Penn Players Summer Theater, which was a one day show that freshmen paid half-price tickets for. This sounds extraordinarily like Small Fall to me, and I would not be surprised if Penn Players Summer Theater evolved directly into Small Fall, which began as a Penn Players annual production. I know that Small Fall was already around as early as 1991, and sixteen years is not really that long for a Penn Players tradition to last. They're probably the same event under different names.

⁷³ The following information mostly comes from several conversations I had with Seymour over email and phone, but an article from *Wharton Magazine* (<http://whartonmagazine.com/issues/summer-2002/wharton-then-and-now/>), also written using interviews with Seymour, verifies much of what we discussed.

In the 1974-1975 year, Seymour directed and starred in *Company* with Players and Wharton and the Arts. The reason that he starred is that he cast three equity performers in the show, and these actors all left for other shows in the middle of the rehearsal process. He was forced to use a body double in order to be able to block scenes from the audience, and he enlisted Jan Silverman as his eyes in the audience when he was acting onstage. This was the first time that Penn had performed a Harold Prince musical since Prince graduated, and Prince came to see their final dress rehearsal. The Pennsylvania Players archives contain records of this visit, and of Prince's supportive telegram that he sent to Players on opening night.

In 1976, the year after Seymour graduated, arts-minded students at Wharton bucked their reliance on Players and created their own group, the Wharton Follies. The Follies produce an original revue-style musical every year, and they still exist today. Their first show, *A Placement Line*, was put up in 1977. These shows are comedies, and they usually contain appearances by Wharton faculty members in goofy cameos. The Follies put on a massive show with a six-figure budget, and they also make short digital music videos for the internet a la SNL Digital Shorts.

Returning to Seymour himself, his final Penn theatre activity took place in September of 1976, when he was persuaded to come back to Penn to direct *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* for a new student group called Theatre Pennsylvania. Todd "Buzz" Haimen founded the group and produced the show, after having met Seymour while working on Players' *Company*. This would be the only musical that Theatre Pennsylvania ever produced, but Haimen had much more luck in his future endeavors. He went on to become the Artistic Director of the world-famous Roundabout Theatre Company in New York, a position which he still holds. The three person Executive Staff of Roundabout also contains a second Penn Player, Harold Wolpert, as managing director. This means that what is perhaps New York City's most famous theatre company is essentially run by Players alums.

Wharton is not the only Penn grad school to put on its own theatre, however. The Law School has been in the theatre business for just about as long. In 1977, students at Penn Law performed Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury*, the same one act operetta that Penn

Singers performed as its entrance into the light opera scene. Such a short operetta must be a very nice one to get started on before moving up to the big leagues. A blog post on Penn Law's website with no stated author ⁷⁴ mentions that this first show was the result of an evolution that began in 1971 when two Law professors, unnamed in the blog, formed an octet of people in the Law School community to sing Christmas Carols in the Great Hall. The next major change in the LSLOC's history was their move away from light opera. They decided to begin performing Broadway-style musicals in 1991, a few years after Singers started doing the same. Unlike Singers, they did not also continue with G&S operettas. In 2012, LSLOC broke from tradition again and performed an original musical, *Intervention*, written by third year student Matt Corriel, who had written the musical before coming to Penn Law. The LSLOC performs its musicals in the Law School's Fitts Auditorium.

The Theatre Arts Program

In the decades before the 1970s, it had been a common refrain among students in the Penn theatre community that there should be classes in theatre practice offered at Penn. The English department covered plays from Shakespeare to the Twentieth Century, and the Classics Department covered Greek and Roman plays (although the English department also covers Classical Greek plays, which really makes no sense when you think about it), but there were no classes in acting, directing, or stagecraft aside from Professor John Dolman's one Play Production class offered in the College for Women from 1921 to the 1950s. So groups such as the University Drama Club, the Zelosophic Society, and Penn Players offered these classes instead. In the mid-Seventies, at the request of students, the College of Arts and Sciences finally put together a faculty committee to devise a theatre major, which was eventually phased in around 1977 and 1978, with its first graduating seniors in 1980. But the requests of students were not

⁷⁴ https://www.law.upenn.edu/live/news/4662-penn-laws-light-opera-co-presents-rent#.U5ImF_ldWio

I also used this DP article: <http://www.thedp.com/article/2012/11/a-break-from-the-law-books>

enough to bring about the Theatre Arts Program. In order to see how this major developed, we have to go outside of Penn and look at the academic context of the time.

The Ivy League had never been very open to the idea of theatre departments or majors. Oxford and Cambridge, the English schools on which the Ivy League schools were roughly based, did not have academic theatre programs, but instead had thriving communities of student-run theatre clubs. This is the model that Penn and the other Ivies adopted, and it is evident today that the crowded theatre scene at Penn is one of the things that sets it apart from schools where theatre is monopolized by a department and those who choose to major in it. Two sorts of American schools came with theatre programs up until the 1970s. There were the small liberal arts schools, often all-women's schools, which had theatre as a core part of the curriculum. And there were also the large, Midwestern land grant universities from the end of the Nineteenth Century with forensics or speech departments which eventually came to include theatrical performance. The famous University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance was founded as the School of Music in 1880, and has been churning out world famous theatre practitioners ever since. Those Ivy League schools which had strong interest in theatre, however, had to rely upon students to fill the demand on their own.

This began to change in the Seventies. In the five years before Penn developed a theatre program, Brown and then Cornell both developed theatre programs. Yale, home to the world renowned graduate School of Drama, only developed an undergraduate theatre program at around the same time as Penn. Penn's Theatre Arts Program was established as an interdepartmental major, not as a department of its own. The initial professors were the members of the faculty committee which designed the major, including Henry Gleitman (Psychology), Alex Riasonovksy (History), Dick Wernick (Music), Jean Alter (French) Jerry Prince (French), Fank Trommler (German), and Stuart Curran (English). Jean Alter was the first chair of the program. In the winter of 78/79, Cary Mazer was hired in the English Department, but he was the first person to be hired for the specific purpose of teaching classes in the Theatre Arts Program. He began teaching in Fall 1979, and he became co-chair of the Program along with Alter until 1986, when Mazer got tenure and became sole chair.

Mazer continued as chair until 2004, and still teaches classes in the Theatre Arts Program today.⁷⁵ It is from Professor Mazer that I obtained the bulk of this information about the Theatre Arts Program.

At the start, the Program was mostly devoted to teaching students about theatre, and not about actually performing it in class or on stage. There was one year-long course called Theatre Lab I which served as an introduction to acting and directing, taught by Ilona Gerbner, which culminated in a public production of student-directed one acts in the Studio Theatre (now the Bruce Montgomery Theater) in the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts. Gerbner also taught Theatre Lab II, which performed a production at the end of the year directed by Gerbner. The one acts used in the Lab I and Lab II productions were a very tiny amount of theatre compared to the experience that students could get in the student groups, and Gerbner would often use the same one acts every other year or so, making each performance feel less special. In the '83-'84 school year, the Program got a grant to stage productions outside of the classroom, and that year featured a production of Euripides' *Electra*, directed by Mazer, and *Woyzeck*, directed by student Joumana Rizk, C'84. The next year there was some debate as to whether productions should be staged outside of the Theatre Lab Classes, and the productions ultimately began again in the '85-'86 year. In 1987, Gerbner went half-time and Ian Watson was hired to be the new primary theatre lecturer teaching acting. Watson was replaced by Ed Isser in '83, who was in turn replaced by Rose Malague in '85. Upon Gerbner's retirement in 1989, Jim Schlatter was hired as a second full-time lecturer, and then Marcia Ferguson was hired in the early 90s so be a third lecturer. Mazer, Malague, Schlatter, and Ferguson still teach for the Program today, along with David Fox, who teaches musical theatre history, and several lecturers who are not professors.

By the late 1980s, the Theatre Arts Program was putting up two to six productions per year, in addition to student-directed thesis projects. Acting theses were usually done in faculty-directed productions. In the early '90s, the Program started taking shows to

⁷⁵ I took a course with him called Acting Shakespeare in my junior year. I also acted in a staged reading of a play he wrote called *Pinchas Vontz*.

Edinburgh, presumably for the Fringe Festival⁷⁶. Theatre Arts (or Tharts, as it's often called by students) had become a real part of the Penn theatre community. But the student groups still remained more populous and popular than Tharts. The groups had been asking for a theatre major for a long time, but it had never seemed like a realistic goal, and the number of groups multiplied as students assumed they would have to make their own theatre opportunities. The result of this was that even when the students finally got what they said they wanted, a theatre program, the student groups were too entrenched to give much ground up to the new program. The Program once had around a dozen graduating seniors per year, but now it only has a handful per year, and not all of those students actively participate in Tharts shows. Many of them focus on TAC-e, Singers, Underground Shakespeare, and other student groups. Still, some actors from the student groups will also act in Tharts shows on occasion. Despite its difficulty getting and retaining actors, Tharts still stages many shows per year, even if it has less cachet than the student groups in the Penn theatre community.

Bloomers

It is surprising at first glance that Mask and Wig made it almost a century without seeing a female counterpart arise. But then, it is surprising that Penn did not allow Women into the College of Arts and Sciences until 1975. Some students groups had integrated before then, as we saw even in the Golden Age, and most classes were available to both men and women. But up until 1975, separate but equal was seen as perfectly acceptable by the administration. Even after Penn was integrated, only about one third of the student body was female, and there were very few extracurricular outlets for women. Players, Singers, and Quadramics all existed, but the only all-women groups on campus were sororities, and sororities were not for everyone. One woman who was not interested in joining a sorority was freshman Joan Harrison, C'81.

Harrison's arrival at Penn coincided with a Mask and Wig which was enjoying renewed popularity with their newer sketch style

⁷⁶ I was in the 2010 Edinburgh Fringe Festival. My high school did Medea, and I played Creon. It was extremely fun.

of comedy, inspired in part by SNL, which had debuted in 1975. Unlike Mask and Wig, SNL had women, a fact which did not go unnoticed by Harrison. In an interview with Marisa Brau, C'12,⁷⁷ she said:

What also was happening at that time was Saturday Night Live had really bubbled up to the surface by then and there were some great comedians on that show—Lorraine Newman and Gilda Radner. This was in the very late 70's and it just seemed to foment the idea of a female comedy group. Finally women were being ribald and funny in a coed group nationally. We hadn't seen that before on television.

While multiple women over time had attempted to audition for Mask and Wig in the past⁷⁸, Harrison was not interested in joining a group which had no interest in her solely because she was a woman. And while Harrison wanted to be in a comedy group, much more important

⁷⁷ This chapter could not have been written without the research of Marisa Brau, who wrote a thorough and exhaustive history of Bloomers and its cultural context which I cannot hope to match in this tiny chapter. I also spoke with Joan Harrison over the phone to get a direct account of the founding and its context.

⁷⁸ Brau's history contains this passage on the subject:

The archives do include, however, an incident in which, according to a personal file from Mask and Wig's historian, Steve Goff from the class of 1962, in 1970 a sophomore from the College for Women, Suzy Sang, came to try-outs but was not allowed to audition. Mask and Wig, which was 83 years old at this point, was reaffirming its tradition of excluding women from its ranks. A group from Women's Liberation filed a complaint with the University against Mask and Wig, calling the group discriminatory. They demanded that the Student Activities Council cease funding to the group. The Council determined, however, that Mask and Wig was not discriminatory but rather, "presenting an art form which by definition must exclude women. (This same reasoning was followed by the Glee Club when such became under discussion as to for men only)" (Steve Goff) When the Universities position as a government contractor was called into question, the Daily Pennsylvanian (a student newspaper) printed the following: "The University, as a government contractor, is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of sex, under an Executive Order signed by former President Johnson in 1967. Student Activities, however, are funded, not by the institution as a whole, but rather by students' general fee, and thus would probably not be a threat to the University's continuance as a contractor."

to her was the need to fill this empty hole for women on campus when it came to women's groups.

In the fall of 1978, Harrison and her two roommates, Barb Finkelstein and Amy Albert, distributed fliers which read "said "Women, the time has come for the first all-female musical comedy group in the Ivy League,⁷⁹ please join us at the initial meeting of Bloomers in Houston Hall." 200 women came out to the meeting, and Harrison announced the creation of Bloomers to great cheers. Harrison says that "all of the women stood up and cheered. It was a real moment." Not only the performers were women, but also the tech and band were made up only of women. Bloomers was also a very diverse group, which was a goal of Harrison's. In addition to being a high quality group, Bloomers was to become a space for any woman who wanted to take charge of her own extracurricular life on a campus that was still disappointingly male-dominated. Harrison notes how important it was to have a space to lampoon the numerous problematic behaviors and attitudes on campus, such as the dismissive and sexist stereotype of the "Wharton Woman," and the lack of female representation on the faculty. The late Seventies were a real time of change for women at Penn, and in many ways Bloomers was at the vanguard of this change. Once Bloomers proved that a women's performing arts group could be successful (Monty had derailed Pennsingers' mission to be a performing arts group for only women some five years earlier, so no students on campus remembered a time with such a group), the floodgates were opened. Women's a capella groups began to appear, as this was also around the time when a capella exploded. Harrison also took Glee to task on the sexist lyrics which they used from year to year, helping aid Glee in becoming the extremely tolerant group that it is today.⁸⁰

After that first meeting, Jackie Green, also of the Class of '81, joined the group and soon became the top writer. Harrison wanted to keep the membership to mostly freshmen and sophomores at first so that the group would be able to get going strongly without losing any

⁷⁹ In fact, Bloomers is the first collegiate all-female comedy and musical sketch group in the nation, not just the Ivy League.

⁸⁰ Glee actually has many women on its tech staff every year. While the group seems likely to continue to have all-male performers for the rest of its existence, it is no longer a homogeneous group of students.

key members right away. For funding, Bloomers joined SAC, and also got some money from the Penn Women's Center, which had been founded in 1973. The first performance was in the Christian Association (which now seems to be the ARCH building based on its description by Harrison), and it sold out every night. The next semester, in March of 1979, Bloomers performed another show, *Fruit of the Bloomers*, in Houston Hall. The group had very edgy humor, and Harrison notes that some sketches "made our parents uncomfortable." Bloomers would go on to perform one show a year which was a collection of sketches that included original music. At some point between then and now, Bloomers began performing twice a year and adopted the format of one act of sketches and a short, original musical in the second act, much like the Mask and Wig fall show. Bloomers and Mask and Wig have a good degree of interaction and what might be called a friendly rivalry. The two of them make up a sort of community which is separate from the central theatre community but contains some overlap with it. For example, in my senior year, the Business Manager of Penn Players, Layla O'Kane, C'14, was the Chairwoman of Bloomers. Bloomers may not have the name recognition that Mask and Wig has, but it is perhaps even more important than Wig in a culture that has still been unable to dismantle the structural inequalities which leave men privileged over women.

iNtuitons

At the end of the 1970s, we have only two student groups that perform non-musical plays. These two groups are also the only two groups on campus which perform professionally written Broadway-style musicals. Quadramics had established itself as the legitimate competitor to Players. One was professionally-directed, one was not, and both thrived. But now that Players' monopoly on the community was broken for good and Quadramics had proven the viability of starting a new theatre group, it was only a matter of time before new groups appeared. iNtuitons was the next group, and it was very different from anything that had come before. It was alternative, one might say.

In 1980, several students decided that none of the existing theatre groups at Penn offered them the ability to perform truly

experimental works. Players and Quadramics were too beholden to their reputations and their budgets and their need to cast enough actors in traditional roles to keep the community happy. A new experimental theatre company would have nothing holding it back from performing any kind of bizarre shows it wanted to. Even performance art was on the table. So these students created iNtuitons, which is a combination of the words “intuition” and “automaton.” The Preamble to their Constitution says that iNtuitons was created “in order to attract people with diverse artistic interests and in order to provide an outlet for creative people whose ideas are too ‘Classical,’ ‘Avant-garde,’ or ‘Experimental’ to be supported by existing groups.”

The first performance by iNtuitons was in Spring 1980, and it was called *An Evening of Impressionism*. The performance was given in the Bennett Hall⁸¹ library, and according to iNtuitons’ old website, they painted directly on the walls and received a union grievance.⁸² A few weeks later, the group staged a play called *The Further Adventures of Nick Danger* during which they used all the walkways and levels of the performance space. iNtuitons performed a mix of existing plays with an experimental twist and wholly original plays like *An Evening of Impressionism*. While their second, third, and fourth plays (*Nick Danger*, *The Private Life of the Master Race*, and *Medea*) were not original, the group followed these by a return to creating brand new theatre. On March 4-6, 1982, iNtuitons collaborated with the Philomathean Society on an original play called *Reds in Filmland*. This play was staged in several rooms in the Philomathean Halls on the 4th floor of College Hall, primarily in the meeting room. The meeting room stood in for the location of the hearings of Senator Joseph McCarthy’s House Un-American Activities Committee. Philo and iNtuitons worked together to research the 1950s communist witch hunt and to write the play, and iNtuitons produced and acted in the play. Philo and iNtuitons worked together again in the spring of 1985 on the play *Do Black Cats Have Tails?*, about the life of Virginia Woolf, which was written by Philo and acted by iNtuitons in Houston Hall. In between those two original plays, iNtuitons did a good deal of other original work. *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust* in Spring 1983 was a stage adaptation

⁸¹ Now called Fisher-Bennett Hall after its 2005 renovation.

⁸² <http://www.dolphin.upenn.edu/intuition/shows/past.html>

of David Bowie's similarly titled concept album from 1972. *Macbeth - Ubo Roi* was an extremely bizarre piece from Fall 1984. Here is its description on the old iNtuitons website

The intention was to perform the French absurdist play *Ubo Roi*, one of the first absurdist plays written, and a takeoff on *Macbeth*. However, the cast and crew proclaimed to the public to be performing *Macbeth* as written by Shakespeare. The first two scenes were performed perfectly from the script. But gradually through the first act, strange things happened, and lines from *Ubo Roi* snuck in, with the other characters reacting as actors. Finally, the whole thing fell apart, the stage manager came out and announced that there had been a mistake and that this was in fact *Ubo Roi*. The play continued from there. Performed on HH stage, the set consisted of re-arrangeable units of metal sheets propped in clay blocks.

Another standout original work was Spring 1985's *Orpheus*. The cast and directors spent months doing improv workshops and researching various different tellings of the myth of Orpheus. A day or two before the show, they created a rough outline for the performance, but even then it changed every night. By this point, almost all of iNtuitons' shows, if they had a traditional stage/audience separation (which was by no means true all the time), had the actors performing in the rear of the Houston Hall Auditorium, across the room from the stage. Today, nearly all plays in the Class of 1949 Auditorium are performed across the room from the stage, in part because the stage was filled in during renovations, leaving only a few feet of stage space where the edge used to be. But in the 1980s, performing across from the stage was still somewhat transgressive.

The next major development in iNtuitons' history was the first Alternative Theatre Festival in Spring 1994. The Alternative Theatre Festival, or ATF, consists today of several short, student-written, experimental one acts. Sometimes, especially in the '90s, other theatre troupes from Penn and around the nation would be invited to perform. The festival was performed on College Green at the end of the school year in its early years. When ATF was outdoors, it also sometimes featured fun and games to be played outside. ATF rained out in 1995, and no contingency plans were made to move it elsewhere. The ATFs in the early years often fell victim to bizarre mishaps, which perhaps

added to their charm. In 1996, iNtuitons managed to obtain a tent and a stage to put near College Green, but this was not repeated in 1997, when rain again forced iNtuitons inside. This time, at least, they were able to still have ATF in Houston Hall. That year also featured an appearance by Penn Players, who performed a sneak peak of their play that semester. In 1998, more rain forced iNtuitons to make an emergency retreat into Castle, whose residents allowed them to perform in the living room. By 2002, there was an “annual board skit” in place, but it is not clear when that tradition began or ended. There was no ATF in 2007, and in 2008 it returned with a new format, being performed in the lobby of the Platt Performing Arts House. Now the festival would consist solely of student-written one acts, and it would take place in mid-September. It almost always is held after auditions, and therefore is not a marketing tactic like Front Row’s NSO show and Small Fall.

Now there were three Penn student groups performing non-musical theatre, with Players and Quadramics also performing professionally written Broadway-style musicals. The next group to join these three in performing plays and musicals would appear three years after iNtuitons, and it would round out the groups that I often refer to today as “The Big Four.”

Arts House/Front Row

The founding of Arts House Theatre Company was only the first of many things that Seth Rozin did for the Penn theatre community. Today, Rozin is known primarily as the Penn alum who founded InterAct Theatre, a well-known and successful theatre company in Philadelphia. But he is much more than just a name to put on the list of “Famous Penn Players Alums.” I have found few other students in my research who have done as much for Penn theatre or changed as much as Rozin did as a student and as an alumnus (Kaki Marshall and Arthur Hobson Quinn come to mind).

Rozin arrived at Penn as a freshman in Fall 1982, and he was given a dorm room in the Arts House program of High Rise East

(HRE⁸³). HRE eventually was named Harnwell after former Penn President Gaylord P. Harnwell, and the Arts House still exists therein. I myself lived in the Harnwell Arts House my sophomore year. Near the end of his freshman year, Rozin discovered that there was a budget for the Arts House to have activities, and that budget was going unused. With these funds, Rozin produced *Jaques Brel is Alive and Well* one weekend in September in Houston Hall, making this the second time that musical was used to kick off a new theatre group (Wharton and the Arts being the other). Rozin took advantage of this source of funding not only because it was available, but also because he wished to escape the bureaucratic tentacles of SAC, a sentiment many of us have felt on occasion.⁸⁴ On the subject of making Arts House independent of SAC, Seth tells me “I thought of myself as an entrepreneur, though some in the Office of Student Life, including Peter Whinnery, thought of me as a pain-in-the-ass upstart.” It should be noted here that Seth and Peter are dear friends today, but Seth is probably not far off in his assessment.

While Seth was climbing the ranks of Players Board, eventually becoming Chair his senior year, he also produced and/or directed four more musical productions for Arts House. *The Fantasticks* and *King of Hearts* were preexisting musicals, and *Thieves Carnival* was an original musical based on the play. Arts House also produced a Sondheim Review advertised with the phrase “Funded by SAD,” which stood for “Seth and David,” the co-producers. All SAC-funded performances must bear the phrase “Funded by SAC” on their posters, so this was a nice little jab at the establishment. At some point in the following years, however, Arts House joined SAC and PAC and TAC-e, and then it ceased to be an antiestablishment group. The Underground Shakespeare Company fills that role of non-SAC-funded high rise theatre group today. A few years after Arts House Theatre

⁸³ This acronym is used frequently in Penn yearbooks and records, with seemingly no one having an issue with the fact that HRE is the acronym for the Holy Roman Empire.

⁸⁴ At the final PAC meeting I ever attended, when I was no longer the Players Chair, I even publically uttered the entirely empty threat to take Players out of SAC if they kept cutting our budget and permitted number of shows. I was being deliberately melodramatic, but the point is that especially in this post-Moratorium age, dealing with SAC can be a headache.

Company got started, Arts House Dance began, and that group is still associated with the Harnwell Arts House.

We will come back to Seth Rozin's influences on Penn theatre in the upcoming chapter about PAC, but now let us move ahead to the next great change in Arts House's history. In the late 1990s, AHTC decided to join PAC, and at this point they now had a reliable annual income source and the ability to perform in other spaces besides the Harnwell basement, which was and is called the Rathskeller. In the final years of the last millennium, AHTC began to perform less and less in the Rathskeller, first cutting from every show to one show per year in the space, and then by 2000 at the latest, they performed no shows in Harnwell.⁸⁵ In the 2002-2003 year, by which point AHTC had absolutely no connection to Harnwell or the Arts House anymore, they decided to change their name, with the three final options being Shadow Box Theatre, Naked Theatre, and Front Row Theatre. Front Row was ultimately selected, and at Bacchanal in 2003, Front Row Theatre Company announced its new name and identity.

At the same time this was happening, AHTC/FTC wasn't swearing off help from college houses altogether, just from Harnwell. Harnwell didn't have a good performance space to offer, and it also offered few to no additional resources for the company, so AHTC left, but they still did desire resources in addition to those provided by PAC. There was a concern that money was becoming too tight in PAC and would only get tighter as the years went on. The problem was solved by Frank Pellicone, the new House Dean of Harrison College House, another high rise dorm, who took the job in 2000. In Fall 2001, he taught a course on "Comedy" which contained a freshman by the name of Benjamin Kamine. The next semester, Ben became involved with Arts House the next semester, and Frank took an interest in the group. He was surprised that every college house didn't have its own resident theatre company, so he reached out to Ben and Charlie Forster, a sophomore in Arts House, about them coming to Harrison. Frank offered Front Row the ability to perform shows in the Harrison rooftop lounge, which was about to be remodeled. The Front Row students

⁸⁵ Much of this information comes from email conversations I had with Charles Forster, C'05, and Frank Pellicone, the Harrison House Dean from 2000 to today.

would even get input on the renovation so that proper lighting equipment would be able to be installed.⁸⁶ Front Row was also to get an office in the upper lobby of Harrison, a storage closet, and several Front Row members would be able to get rooms in Harrison in the early room assignment period that is usually reserved for special residential programs.⁸⁷ Ben and Charlie first staged a non-Front Row show in Harrison, involving jugglers according to Frank, in order to make sure the space was performance ready. In the 2004-2005 season, Front Row finally staged its first performance in the Harrison rooftop lounge. The play was *Copenhagen* by Michael Frayn, and it may have starred Victoria Frings, now an actress on the Broadway stage.⁸⁸ Within a year or two, the agreement was modified so that Front Row would perform two non-PAC shows in Harrison every year. One was performed during NSO, and the other was during the winter season, with rehearsals occurring at the same time as the TAC-e One Acts. From that point on, there has been almost no change in Front Row's organization.

It is also worth noting that at some point around the time Front Row took its new name, they put in their constitution that they are the "socially relevant" theatre group at Penn. This means that they perform plays and musicals which are socially relevant, and they also must do some sort of community service for each show. The service manifests

⁸⁶ Could the infamous "colorful bitch cable" be from this time?

⁸⁷ More and more people who worked on Front Row began asking for rooms in Harrison, until eventually it was no longer possible to just give out rooms in the less popular residential programs. When I first got Front Row housing in the 2012-2013 year, the other Front Row people and I were given rooms in a residential program called World Cinema on the 7th and 8th floors. These two floors were probably 1/3 Front Row people, 1/3 people who actually applied to World Cinema, and 1/3 random people who got the leftover rooms. The fact that anyone who worked on any Front Row show was entitled to housing in Harrison started to become more well-known, and Front Row housing became extremely popular. In the 2013-2014 school year, Harrison switched the 7th and 8th floors to a new program called Harrison and the Arts, which housed some arts inclined students who had nothing to do with Front Row, but mostly existed to serve the burgeoning Front Row population. I'd say that about half the apartments on those floors last year contained at least one person who got the apartment through Front Row.

⁸⁸ Frings may have actually starred in a separate show for Arts House called *Copernicus*, or my information on *Copernicus* may be inaccurate, and my source actually misremembered the name of *Copenhagen*.

itself in various way. Sometimes, Front Row gives an improv workshop for West Philadelphia youth on one afternoon. On a recent show, the board collected used ink cartridges from the cast and donated them to a recycling program. Sometimes they will do audio recordings of children's books for free. It is required that every PAC group have its own unique angle which justifies its separate existence from the other PAC groups, and social relevance and community service are what allowed Front Row to get into PAC and TAC-e when Quadramics already was a student-directed theatre group which did plays and musicals. In regards to the social relevance of the shows, Front Row boards over the years vary in how seriously they take that requirement. Sometimes social relevance is deemed to mean only shows that are recently written, and sometimes any show can be socially relevant if the director can make an argument that its themes are still relevant today. Front Row has discussed eliminating the requirement for social relevance and relying solely on community service to set themselves apart, but they have always decided to keep social relevance as a part of their constitution. As we will see in the final part of this book which reaches the present day, Front Row has now set itself apart from the pack in ways that have nothing to do with social relevance.

Stimulus Children's Theatre

Today, there are multiple themed theatre groups, like groups which focus on African-American theatre, South Asian theatre, Jewish theatre, socially relevant theatre, and many more. But once, there were no such groups. The first one on Penn campus was Stimulus Children's Theatre, but in their case, the theme came before the theatre did. A few years prior to 1988, STIMULUS (from what I can tell in the Record, it was in all caps but not an acronym, although this changed before long) was founded by a med student named Ken Ginsburg. Stimulus provided enrichment programs to individual classes at Lea and Drew, two elementary schools in West Philadelphia. Penn students picked topics of interest to them that they wanted to teach on, prepared a one hour lesson on that topic, gave their availability, and the teachers at the two schools would give them times to come. A junior named Rachel Kugelmass, C'89, got involved with Stimulus in her junior year and gave a talk on literary devices such as onomatopoeia in Shel Silverstein

poetry. When Ginsberg finished his residency at the Children's Hospital at the University of Pennsylvania, Kugelmass and her roommate, Laura Denenberg, C'89, were essentially put in charge of Stimulus as chairs. In her senior year, Kugelmass decided that it might be to bring live theatre to the schools as enrichment. She had previously worked on other Penn theatre shows such as the Spring Fling musical, and she had even spent a year on Quadramics Board. But by the time she joined Stimulus, she felt a bit burned out on the Penn theatre scene. Still, she decided to make theatre work for Stimulus, while Denenberg was more in charge of the traditional enrichment aspects of Stimulus.

The show Kugelmass chose was *Snoopy!!*, a musical about the Charlie Brown characters. They may or may not have stretched the truth on getting the rights to it. The show was directed by David Stern, C'89 ENG'89, whom Kugelmass had met in Quadramics the previous year, and the music director was John Coopersmith, C'91 ENG'91, also someone who had worked on Quadramics. Auditions for the show had a child-themed twist, with each actor being required to draw a picture in crayon on the back of their audition form (an activity which is still in use for many Stim shows today). Stimulus was SAC-recognized but not recognized by PAC, so they had no access to PAC rehearsal or performance spaces and budget for performances. They went to SAC with a proposal for their new expansion, and SAC only gave them \$100, a fairly insignificant sum for putting on a show even in 1988. But they made it happen, rehearsing in any space they could find, including dorm rooms. Kugelmass noted the irony in how the Penn theatre community came together to make the show happen, despite the fact that the show was a result of her frustration with the Penn theatre community.

The show was performed for multiple audiences, including the Drew and Lea schools, families at Ronald McDonald House, patients at the Penn Hospital, two campus volunteer groups, and for students on Penn's campus.⁸⁹ In order to bring the show from place to place, a traveling set was thrown together which consisted of two flats hinged together and six collapsible cubes painted different colors on each side. The cubes could be turned to indicate new locations. Kugelmass transported the set in her station wagon with the flats on the roof. After

⁸⁹ 1989 Record

she drove the set to the performance location, she would drive back to get the actors bring them. For their performance at Penn, they couldn't get any actual theatre spaces, so they performed in the room behind Houston Hall's Auditorium where dance groups sometimes rehearse. They held their auditions in that room as well. iNtuitons was in the Houston Hall Auditorium that weekend, and they were very worried about the competition next door, but Stimulus worked it out with them so that the shows would be performed at different times, and many signs were posted differentiating the two.

Theatre was a hit for Stim. Kugelmass handed the group over to Janice Jackson, C'93, who ran it for at least the next year. The transition was smooth, and theatre became the main focus of the group, which was soon rebranded as Stimulus Children's Theatre. Stim continued performing children's theatre for students at Penn and also in schools around Philly. In addition to these performances, Stim members gave theatre workshops for the children. Two members of the *Snoopy* cast were even invited to direct a class play at one of the schools. The 1998 Record mentions "a Winter Workshop Day where children learn about diverse theater elements." After the first few performances, Stim shifted to performing plays written by Penn students, and there was a point when they even did plays written in part by the local elementary school students. After some time doing that, they returned to professionally-written plays. Stimulus Children's Theatre started out as an attempt to get away from what the rest of the theatre community was doing, and it has always been somewhat independent from the other groups. But it has also never been completely separated from the other groups either, and as the years went by, it became one of the essential theatre groups on Penn's campus and a core part of the community.

The Late Eighties: Other Groups

In addition to the groups we have discussed this far, several other groups arose in the 1980s, most of which quickly passed out of existence. The first of these was the Hill Players, which was founded as early as 1983. The 1983 Record shows that the group performed *Sweet Charity* that year. Penn does not have the 1981 or 1982 Records publically available, so I cannot be sure if that was their first year or

not. The Hill Players appeared in several yearbooks after that, sometimes performing plays and sometimes musicals, but never more than one show per year. The Record pages always only contain pictures and the show titles, with no information or names of students, so at first I wasn't able to track down any members. But by a sheer stroke of luck, Rachel Kugelmass, the person responsible for shifting Stim to theatre, acted in a Hill Players show (*Lovers and Other Strangers*) and told me what she remembered about the group. In some ways, Hill Players is reminiscent of Quadramics in that both groups are named after a college house, but neither the rehearsals nor the performances took place in that college house, and the students in the groups did not have to live there. Unlike Quadramics, Hill Players was not very prestigious. Its reputation was not close to that of any of the other theatre groups on campus, and it doesn't sound as though students were clamoring to be in Hill Players shows over Penn Players and Quadramics shows. Still, they made do with what they had. There's always room on campus for a company who will take the actors who didn't make the other plays, and sometimes this company can be even more fun than some of the others. Even important people in the community such as Players Chair Julian Brightman, C'87, were known to do Hill Players shows. Their final appearance in the Record, as far as I was able to ascertain, was in 1990 with *A Thurber Carnival*, a 1960 musical revue by James Thurber. They were certainly gone by the 1992/93 school year, when TAC-e was created.

In 1989, there were two different experiments with putting on plays that combined students and faculty. One was a play called *Angels Over Penn* which was not affiliated with any specific Penn theatre group. A group of faculty and administrators decided to put on an original play about Penn's architecture, and a few students were also in the cast. The tech staff was almost entirely made of students. The gargoyles on Penn's campus were the "angels" of the title. The pictures in the yearbook appear to be of people singing, which might mean that this was a musical. Whatever this show was, nothing like it ever happened again. The closest thing was another play that same year, also spearheaded by an employee of Penn.

Kathryn Helene⁹⁰ was the successor to Kaki Marshall once Marshall left Penn, and Helene had the new title of Student Performing Arts Coordinator. She took the job in July 1988, and was given the recently graduated Seth Rozin as an assistant. She was the Penn staff member who supervised PAC, and she also represented PAC to the higher authorities at Penn. This was before the Platt Performing Arts House was built, so her office was in Annenberg. Helene wanted to create a theatre group which would combine students and staff, bringing the expertise of people like Seth Rozin and Peter Whinnery (who we'll read about in the next chapter) to bear on Penn productions. She also wanted to use theatre as an agent for social change. This vision took the form of a new theatre group called Take-Charge Theater. TCT's first play was Martin Sherman's *Bent*, a play about a gay man imprisoned in Dachau during the Holocaust. Helene produced, Rozin directed, Whinnery designed, and students acted. This was followed by two more plays, Ntozake Shange's choreopoem *Spell #7* and Glen Merzer's *Stopping the Desert*. After this, the staff members decided that they were busy enough coordinating all the existing student groups, and Take-Charge put on no more plays. Helene did create an institution called TCT-in-the-Schools in which she and a group of students visited West Philly high school students every week on Penn's campus to play theatre games, do character studies, perform short plays, and talk about theatre and its relationship to life. This program lasted as long as three years, after which most of the original students involved graduated. Helene herself left Penn in September 1995 to take a position as the director of a children's theatre in Florida, and she was replaced by Carolyn Noone. The other major thing that Kathryn Helene did shortly before leaving was to find the church that would be converted into the Iron Gate Theatre, one of the main performance spaces on Penn's campus. The Quadramics Fling musical, Mask and Wig's Fall Show, Charitable Laughter (a comedy collaboration between Wig, Bloomers, Without a Net, and Simply Chaos for charity), and many dance shows are performed at Iron Gate, along with some groups that will perform there as often as not, like

⁹⁰ Most of this information comes from my email correspondence with Helene, but the 1989 Record also has a page for Take-Charge Theater which corroborates all the names and dates she mentioned.

Penn Singers for their fall musical. In the years before the Iron Gate was converted into a theatre, the Q Fling show and the Players fall musical were performed in the Annenberg School Theatre, not to be confused with the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts. This theatre was in the Annenberg School of Communications building next door to the Performing Arts Center, and has since been turned into a library or some such room.

The last theatre group which suddenly appeared in the 80s and then disappeared was Modern Greek Theater. This was not a cultural group about the nation-state of Greece, but rather a group which performed Ancient Greek theatre in a modern context. They only appear in the 1990 Record, where it says they performed a play that was somehow related to the legendary poet Orpheus. The pictures of the production indicate that all the actors were wearing black turtlenecks. This is all we know about Modern Greek Theater.

A very different sort of theatre group appeared in the 1980s which has lasted until today. It is the only group of its kind on campus: improvisational theatre. Improv has become extremely popular in America in the last few decades, and Without a Net caught the wave just as it was getting big. In the 1986 Collaborative One Acts by Players, Quadramics, and iNtuitons (Arts House might have been involved, but two students from the early 1990s told me that Arts House was not in One Acts at that time because they already had a winter show⁹¹), one of the one acts was not a short play, but rather a several minute performance of improv comedy. After the One Acts ended, which would have been near the beginning of the spring semester, the students involved in the improv scene decided to make an improv comedy troupe called Without a Net. As early as 1989 until 1998 or later, Without a Net performed “Comedy Extravaganzas” each semester and performed weekly free shows in the Harnwell Rathskeller basement. In 1989, they took their first Spring Break Tour to San Diego, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Without a Net is now a part of SMAC, the Singers, Musicians, and Comedians arm of PAC, and they don’t have much overlap with the other theatre groups. But while they may not be a part of the core theatre community, Without a Net is a theatre group which is very successful and popular on campus.

⁹¹ Cecelia Beyer and Paul Pimentel

PAC Appears

For its first decade SAC was a cumbersome and disorganized body. There were tons of different types of groups under its umbrella, and SAC had to decide each group's level of funding on its own, even if those in charge of SAC lacked the specialized knowledge to oversee some of the more specialized groups. It became clear to the students in performing arts groups that there should be a body which regulates only them, and which would then report to SAC. Seth Rozin, the founder of Arts House, had a hand in this while he was still a student.⁹² At the time, there was a staff member at Annenberg named Doris Mack who would advise student performing arts groups. She met informally with the leaders of these groups as a sort of proto-Performing Arts Council. There were fewer groups in those days. Besides Players, Quadramics, iNtuitions, Arts House, Mask and Wig, Bloomers, Singers, and Glee, all of which we have covered, there were a few a capella and dance groups such as Penn Dance (the original dance group, focusing on contemporary, jazz, and ballet), Quaker Notes (the only all-female a capella group at the time), Penn Six-5000 (an all-male comedy a capella group), and Counterparts (the co-ed, jazz a capella group). There may have already been several more groups by that point. The two main problems for the performing arts community were inequity between the different groups and the need to address differences between these groups and the non-performing arts groups. One SAC for all wasn't going to cut it anymore.

Rozin and Amy Freedman of Bloomers board worked together to address this problem. In Seth's words, there was "no official, formal, fair, and impartial entity to (1) advocate for our shared needs to SAC and the higher-ups, (2) bring us together to discuss solutions for sharing resources, accessing different spaces, etc., and (3) setting policy for all of the performing arts groups to abide by."⁹³ The two of them helped bring about the modern Performing Arts Committee, or PAC. An organization by this name existed in the 1960s, but Rozin indicated that the new PAC was unrelated to the old. At the very least, it is likely that

⁹² This information comes from my interview with Seth Rozin.

⁹³ This comes from an email interview I had with Rozin.

the current relationship between SAC and PAC began with the efforts of Rozin and Freedman. Under this new model, performing arts groups would still have to apply directly to SAC for funding, but once they did so, they could also join PAC to gain the benefits that came with membership, such as the use of rehearsal and performance spaces that suddenly were –only available to PAC members. Another huge benefit to PAC members is access to the PAC shop.

The PAC shop entered the scene in the 1996/97 school year. For a long time, sets were built in a shop in the basement of Irvine. Once the entire student performing arts community had an exodus from Irvine (the space became too expensive due to union fees, and Annenberg and Iron Gate more than made up for losing Irvine), and Irvine decided to remodel its basement, a new space was needed. A space on the second floor of a building on 41st and Walnut was purchased by the university. It had a giant open room for building sets, with several adjoining rooms for costumes, props, furniture, and offices. Peter Whinnery works in the PAC shop, advising student groups on the technical elements for their shows. He started at Penn in the early 1980s, well before the PAC shop became the new headquarters for PAC tech, and he used to take a more hand-on approach to helping students build and load in their sets. As time passed and staff at the actual theatre buildings began to take a more active role in load-ins and tech weeks, Peter’s job mostly became helping students in the shop itself. Peter also teaches courses in stage design and light design for the Theatre Arts Program from the shop. Michelle Moller has also worked in the PAC shop aiding students for many years now.

Another innovation of Rozin’s and Freedman’s was the new Bacchanal party in 1985. In the past, there had been an event called Bacchanal which involved performances by students. At some point it went away, and the new Bacchanal was a party in the outdoor Annenberg Plaza for all PAC members. Once the Platt Performing Arts House was built, Bacchanal moved to its lobby. The University pays for the food and drink, and a bartender serves alcohol to those who are 21 and older. While all of PAC is invited, the only groups that ever seem to come are the TAC-e groups and a few other theatre groups like Singers, Mask and Wig, Bloomers, and Glee. Dance and a capella are usually not in attendance in any remarkable way. Nearly everyone

comes in costume, and the boards of the groups come in themed costumes, with several awards given out for best board, best individual costume, and more. Bloomers Band, Glee Band, or Wig Band provides entertainment.

You will notice that I have now mentioned TAC-e a few times, but I have not yet explained what it is. For PAC's first ten years or so, it was one united body with an elected executive board of three members who could come from any PAC group. Soon that would change, and PAC would be divided into four subcommittees. That is where we will pick up the story in the next section of this book, when the Age of TAC-e begins.

The Age of TAC-e

TAC-e and the PAC Subcommittees

Until this point, the theatre groups loosely formed a larger theatre community, but there were no rules or borders to make this community official. That changed in the 1992/93 school year, when most of the PAC theatre groups were organized into one Theatre Arts Council. This development came as a result of the increasing number of performing arts groups. Just as SAC got too large and had to create subdivisions, one of which was PAC, PAC also had to subdivide into four separate councils. The PAC charter was rewritten to create the A Capella Council (ACC), the Dance Arts Council (DAC), the Theatre Arts Council (TAC), and the Singers Musicians and Comedians (SMAC, which contained all the groups that didn't fit anywhere else). Soon after this, ACC decided to take the acronym ACK, which made it look more like how it was pronounced, even though the K doesn't stand for anything. But in the competition for which subcommittee would have the most useless acronym, TAC was about to take the prize. A student on Quadramics Board, Jesse Hertzberg, W'94, suggested to the rest of the theatre groups that they add an "e" on at the end of TAC, so that it would be pronounced like the word "tacky." He did this for no other reason than because he thought it would be funny. I'm somewhat shocked that everyone went along with it, particularly Players, but somehow it went through. I've heard rumors that the "e" technically stands for "extraneous," but even if that is true, the reason it was added is because it makes it sound like "tacky." According to TAC-e, the "e" officially doesn't stand for anything.

In order for a group to join TAC-e, it would first have to be voted into PAC by the entire PAC body. A theatre group looking to join PAC would first meet with the TAC-e groups, and TAC-e would give a recommendation to either accept or reject that group, which PAC would then use to advise their vote. If a theatre group made it into PAC, then that group would automatically be placed into TAC-e. TAC-e, like all of the subcommittees, has a chair who is elected each year by the member groups. At first the TAC-e chair's only job was to run the casting meeting (more on that in a few paragraphs) and to make sure

everyone got rehearsal space. The TAC-e Chair was not a member of the PAC Executive Board, and neither were the other subcommittee chairs. One Acts and Small Fall had nothing to do with TAC-e for at least four more years.

TAC-e membership was now what defined the core theatre community. The groups that I know for sure were in TAC-e from the start are Penn Players, Quadramics, iNtuitons, and Arts House. I'm not actually sure whether Stimulus had joined PAC yet, but they were in their fifth year, so it's very likely that they were also in that initial class. 4A was only in its second year, and Teatron was in its first year, so neither of those groups were yet in PAC and TAC-e, though both would soon join. The final group to join TAC-e was PenNaatak sometime soon after their founding in 1999. These eight groups made up TAC-e until 2008, when Teatron was kicked out. 4A also was removed from PAC and TAC-e from 2012-2013 before they were readmitted, giving us the seven groups that are in TAC-e today.

You may notice that not every group I have described in this book as a theatre group is among this number. Mask and Wig, Bloomers, Glee, Penn Singers, and Without a Net were all placed into SMAC. Part of this might be because the TAC-e groups all were very similar in that they performed professionally-written plays and musicals, while most of the SMAC groups do not. The TAC-e groups also all worked together on One Acts (with the possible exception of Arts House), while the SMAC groups did not. Singers is a curious case, because it also performed professionally-written musicals, but it had a few things that set it apart from the TAC-e groups. For one, Singers performed no non-musical plays, and every TAC-e group did. Second, Singers operates on a company structure, where students audition to be in the company, and each performer in the company is entitled to a role in every single Singers show for as long as they are at Penn. Techies in the company also must be on the tech staff of every show. Wig, Glee, Net, and Bloomers all had company structures as well, while none of the TAC-e groups did. Tying in with that is the third reason, the casting meeting. All of the TAC-e groups already coordinated their casting with a meeting we will discuss in the next paragraph, and none of the SMAC groups did. The casting meeting had been going on for years before the subcommittees were created, so the TAC-e groups were already something of a community. Lastly, Singers had Bruce

Montgomery in common with Glee and Wig. Players hadn't worked with Monty in decades, but several of the SMAC groups did, and so Singers had a much closer bond with Glee while Monty was still alive. After all, it was formerly the Women's Glee Club. Today, Singers is very close to the TAC-e groups, and it doesn't have very much overlap with the other SMAC groups. This was already mostly true when the subcommittees split, but it made more sense then, and still does now, to keep Singers apart. If Singers were to join TAC-e, then its rehearsals would move to the same time as the TAC-e rehearsals, making it very difficult to do a Singers show and a TAC-e show at the same time. Because Singers has its rehearsals at different times from TAC-e rehearsals, it is extremely popular for students to be in Singers and to also audition for TAC-e shows. I myself did this for both semesters of my freshman year.

A key component of TAC-e is something that already existed since at least the 1980s: the casting meeting. Part of what makes Penn's theatre community so unique compared to other universities is that actors have the opportunity to audition for a large number of student theatre groups without having to worry that they might be hurting their chances at one part by auditioning for another. Each TAC-e group holds its auditions over the same two days, although each group gets its own room and runs its auditions independently. The groups work together to ensure that no student has two callbacks scheduled at the same time, so the callback meeting ends up being a lengthy late-night meeting each semester as the directors, stage managers, producers, and the TAC-e Chair deal with the extremely complex scheduling. The actors don't have to worry about managing their own callback schedules at all. After callbacks, the directors of the shows decide their top six choices for each and every role in their shows, and they submit these lists to the TAC-e chair. Two or three representatives from each group (usually the director, producer, and stage manager) go to a location (probably the TAC-e Chair's home) at midnight after the final callbacks and get ready to maneuver for their ideal casts.

Now I will endeavor to explain how the casting meeting works. Let's say you auditioned for five shows, and three of them have you as their first choice for a role. We'll say *Cats*, *Rent*, and *Mame* all want you really badly. The TAC-e chair will call you on the phone,

which you are instructed to have with you that night, and you will be offered your choice of the three roles. Whichever role you pick is yours. This is an amazing system for the actors, who can audition for as many shows as they want without fear that a show they like less will steal them from a show they like more. They have a choice. Or at least, everything I just said is what I tell to the freshmen who ask about how TAC-e works. The reality is more complicated, and involves some wheeling and dealing. In the previous example, three groups all had you as their first choice. But what if *Cats* has you as their first choice for a lead, *Rent* has you as their second choice for Roger, and *Mame* has you as their third choice for the Angela Lansbury role. If you are called immediately at the start of the casting meeting, you will only be offered *Cats*, since only they had you first, and you will take it. But *Rent* would not want that, because their first choice for Roger might turn them down, and then they'd want to ask you, but you're already taken. It is in their best interest to call their first choice before you are called, so that if they lose their top pick, they can have the TAC-e chair offer you Roger and the *Cats* role, giving them a shot at getting you. That is relatively straightforward, as the TAC-e chair can simply call Roger #1 before calling you. But what happens if Roger #1 is the second choice for the part you would be offered in *Cats*! Then, *Cats* wants to call you first, and *Rent* wants to call Roger #1 first. This results in deadlock, and deadlock is usually much more complicated than this, involving many more people and positions much lower than the second choice, and it can last as long as an hour, preventing anyone from being called in that time. The way to get out is through cutting deals. The obvious deal to cut in my above example is that *Cats* gets you, their first choice, and *Rent* gets their first choice for Roger. But when *Mame* also has you as their third for Angela Lansbury, then things get tricky. Especially if *Mame*'s first choice for Angela is the second choice for Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*, and their second choice for Angela is the first choice for Judas in *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Basically, it's really tricky, and the meeting can go past 3 in the morning. But it's great for actors, and even the people at the meeting seem to enjoy it despite their constant complaints. I never got to go to one, as I was always auditioning, and I am very regretful about that. A week after the casting meeting comes the techie meeting, where tech staff is chosen in a similar fashion. But since techies can work on

two or three shows if they want, there is usually less wheeling and dealing by the groups. I have attended a few techie meetings, and they are still pretty interesting, even if they're not the casting meeting.

One of the first expansions of TAC-e was the annexation of the winter collaborative one acts, creating the TAC-e One Acts, which happened sometime soon after 1997. Each TAC-e group's board was required to contribute a member (or two members at first) to the One Acts Board, just as they had done before TAC-e took over. The only difference was that now it was required, and each TAC-e group had to participate each year. In the One Acts, each short play usually is not connected to a specific group, and members from various TAC-e groups work together on each play. They are usually treated as an opportunity for freshmen and sophomores to get their first directing experience, and for actors to get their first large speaking roles. Juniors and seniors do not ordinarily take large roles on One Acts, and the board is almost always made up of sophomores, as it is a position of responsibility that is good for sophomores who are looking to prove themselves on their new boards.

The other annual TAC-e collaboration was Small Fall, a free show for freshmen that was performed at the start of every school year. Small Fall was originally created by Players to give its members something to do at the very start of the year, and also to serve as a recruitment tool for freshmen. Small Fall was usually a musical, and it was considered a fun start to the year. Small Fall may have had its roots as early as the 1970s, when there was a similar tradition called Penn Players Summer Theatre that was identical to Small Fall in all but name. I know that Summer Theater existed in 1974, as Charlie Seymour Jr. took part in it then and still has a poster. After that, I have not heard anything about Small Fall until the mid-Nineties, so I can't say whether or not it was a continuous tradition that entire time. Even after TAC-e began, Players still hung onto Small Fall. Eventually, partially because Small Fall was a good recruitment tool for all of TAC-e, it became a TAC-e collaboration like Small Fall. It is possible that Players also gave it up to make space in their budget, although I do not know the exact timing or reasons for the switch. It happened sometime in the mid-2000s.

In time, Small Fall began to become less popular, both for freshmen and for TAC-e. One contributing factor was the creation of Front Row's annual NSO (New Student Orientation) Show, which got the prime NSO time slot, was in the cushy, on-campus Harrison rooftop lounge, and was also free for freshmen. The NSO show was also usually a musical, whereas Small Fall was not. Small Fall was also a week after NSO in its final years, and it was off campus in the Iron Gate Theater, which could be hard to find for freshmen. Small Fall was also not advertised as part of the NSO package, so they lost out on audience members who just wanted fun, free things to do before classes started. Freshmen would already have had classes and homework by the time Small Fall came around. I don't know why TAC-e ceded the best time slot to Front Row. I also don't know why they decided that they wouldn't do musicals anymore because Front Row did musicals already. At some point Front Row seized the reins because they were a united board, while the disorganized Small Fall Boards that only lasted for a semester before disbanding were unable to push their own show. As a result of all this, attendance for Small Fall plummeted. I went to see it my freshman year along with a dozen or so other freshmen, but we all would have done theatre anyway, so it wasn't exactly successful in recruiting us. Two years later, in 2012, only two freshmen came to Small Fall, and they paid for what should have been free tickets as the ushers did not even think to ask if they were freshmen. The only reason why TAC-e even knows that any freshmen came is that I told them about it months later. It was actually my soon-to-be girlfriend, Sarah Zerod, C'17, and a hallmate of hers who had no interest in theatre. She came because I told her she should while I was in the process of courting her, and she otherwise would not have heard about it. Essentially, Small Fall was a failure.⁹⁴ On top of that, TAC-e groups began to get sick of the disorganization of Small Fall, which was hastily thrown together each year by a board that didn't know how to work together, with usually at least one member who completely neglected their duties. After years of talking about abolishing Small Fall, the vote to do it finally came at the end of the 2012-2013 school year, as one of the first actions of TAC-e Chair Kelly-Ann Corrigan,

⁹⁴ Although Sarah did become a very successful stage manager in TAC-e, so perhaps Small Fall helped to convince her to join.

C'14. I was present at that meeting and voted against Small Fall. It was replaced with a new annual tradition called "Meet and Theat(re),"⁹⁵ at which freshmen would eat free pizza at Platt, mingle with other freshmen and older students, and hear descriptions of each group by the group chairs. It was extremely well-attended and successful, actually recruiting several students who would not otherwise have joined TAC-e.

A few other events happened at a PAC-wide level after the creation of the subcommittees that are worth mentioning. First, in the year 2001 or so, PAC Exec switched from being a three member board to a five member board, which each subcommittee's chair serving as one of the members. The fifth member was the Community Service Chair, who was elected by the entirety of PAC at a PAC meeting. The other event is more of an ongoing struggle which came to a head in 2001 and threatens to do so again. Around the turn of the millennium, money was getting very tight in PAC. Especially with TAC-e groups, some thought that shows were getting too big. Players had a hit with a blockbuster performance of The Who's *Tommy* in 1999, selling out all four performances. But some sources say that this put them into debt, forcing them to have to make cutbacks the next year. From speaking to other sources, however, I get the sense that this debt story may be apocryphal. Akiva Fox, who we will meet again in the Underground Shakespeare chapter, got so sick of spending all his time worrying about money that he stopped doing shows with Singers and TAC-e in order to make a non-PAC theatre group. Ty Furman, the Director of Student Performing Arts from 1997-2013, had to take measures to cut down on the budgets of these groups and to ensure that there would be enough performance spaces to go around for everyone. The 2001-2002 Compromise⁹⁶ was that every group in PAC could only put on 1.5 shows. One would be a full, independent show, and the "0.5 show"

⁹⁵ I suggested calling it Tiny Fall, which everyone used for the entire summer. But once school came around, Kelly-Ann decided that that would mean nothing to the freshmen, and she changed the name to Meet and Theat(re). I mean, she's right, but I still prefer Tiny Fall.

⁹⁶ I just named it that. It's not really a proper noun. Well, I guess it is now, since I'm the only Penn theatre historian, and historians always get to come up with proper noun names to describe past events. It's a job perk.

would usually also be full-length, but it either had to be a collaboration with another group or a space share. A space share is when two groups perform in the same theatre on the same weekend, with one show usually performed earlier in the night than the other. They can be stressful, but they were necessary. They became especially necessary when the number of PAC groups got out of hand, and in 2014, there are constant rumors that groups will soon have to perform two 0.5 shows every year. An ongoing moratorium on new SAC groups which started in Fall 2012 drove home the magnitude of SAC's money problems. PAC voted to let in three groups in Fall 2013 despite the moratorium (4A and PennYo were let back in after having been previously kicked out, and Disney A Capella got into PAC for the first time), but after that, it became clear that there was no more room for expansion. The main limiting factor is that there aren't even enough performance and rehearsal spaces to satisfy the groups that are in PAC now, let alone new ones. It remains to be seen how PAC will solve its space issues.⁹⁷

Another major PAC-wide development occurred in the year 2006 to address the problem of too many groups. In order to deal with the shortage of rehearsal spaces, a new building was needed on Penn's campus which served solely to provide space for PAC groups. Penn wasn't quite willing to give a whole building to PAC, but Ty Furman managed to get a space in the basement of the Stouffer building. There had previously been a dining hall either in this basement or above it. This space was completely remodeled, resulting in the Platt Performing Arts House. Platt has a large lobby with a stage area for small, free performances. Penn Players' 24 Hour Theatre, iNtuitons Alternative Theatre Festival, and Quadramics' MisQast are among the activities which are performed on this stage. There are also many tables, chairs, and couches where students will often eat, do homework, or socialize. There is a free copy room and a free printer which all the PAC groups use for their printing needs, so long as they bring their own paper. There is a large rehearsal room in the back for the Penn Band, a large dance rehearsal room with a mirror and dance bars, a not-quite-as-large

⁹⁷ In the time between when this book was written and when it went to press, there seem to have been developments on this front. I do not want to speak about them in detail as I am not certain on any details, so it may fall to a future historian to explain how PAC addressed its space issues.

room with mirrors for musical rehearsals (the coveted Platt 180, which replaced Annenberg 511 as the room everyone always wants), a room that same size but without a mirror which sees a lot of rehearsals for TAC-e straight plays, an even smaller rehearsal room than that one, and a very small rehearsal room meant for rock bands. There are also three offices in Platt. One is for the Director of the building, who is also the director for student performing arts. This was Ty Furman until Laurie McCall replaced him in 2013. The second office is for the Associate Director. This is now Maria Fumai Dietrich, but it was Laurie McCall before she was promoted to Director. The third office is for PAC Exec's use. Platt also is well-known for its free coffee and tea, as well as hot chocolate during that time of year. It hosts events for the community as well, such as ASAP, the After School Arts at Penn program for West Philadelphia youth. Everyone loves Platt, and it's also the closest rehearsal space to most students' places of residence. If there is a flaw with Platt, it would have to be the horrible sound leakage through the walls of the rehearsal rooms. To use an example from the recent past, my last ever Platt rehearsal was for *Hedda Gabler*, and we rehearsed in Platt 179. While we were trying to do quiet, emotional scenes, we could quite clearly hear *Hair* rehearsal in 180, the music for a dance rehearsal across the hallway, a rock band rehearsing a few rooms down, and the Korean Drums rehearsing right next to us. We heard those all at the same time, very audibly. Everyone in PAC hates the Korean Drums for that reason. No one in that group is going to read this, so I don't even feel bad. Still, Platt is one of the best parts about doing performing arts at Penn.

Meanwhile, outside of PAC, theatre was coming back in a way that had not been seen since the Golden Age. Non-theatre groups started doing theatre.

Cultural Theatre at Penn

The most dominant new trend in the Age of TAC-e has been the proliferation of cultural theatre groups, which includes the proliferation of cultural groups which perform theatre among their other activities. The advent of SAC coincided with the beginning of the diversification of Penn. So many students come from so many nations and cultures, and these cultural groups began to create student groups

where they could socialize and do activities with others from their cultures. Most of these cultural groups have nothing to do with the performing arts, but many do. There are cultural dance groups, like Dhamaka⁹⁸, and a capella groups, like PennYo. The idea of a cultural theatre group was not new when the modern wave started. Some of the earliest theatre groups at Penn were associated with languages like French and German, although the members of those clubs did not necessarily belong to the French and German cultures. The earliest true cultural groups to perform theatre were the Menorah and Zionist Societies with their 1920 play, followed by several Hillel plays over the next few decades. The Catholic Students Organization, which became the Newman Club, also produced plays from 1918 to 1935, if the Catholic religion can be called a culture. But other than those two groups, there was no real cultural theatre at Penn until 1988, when the Black Arts League was put on a play.

The Black Arts League was created prior to 1987 as a group which would promote art, mostly visual art, by black artists. By the fall of 1987, they were mostly putting on art exhibits, and they had fallen down to only two members. That fall, a freshman named Derick Wilson came to Penn and convinced the Black Arts League to look into theatre. This culminated in a production of *A Raisin in the Sun* in spring 1988, which was the first play by and about African-Americans to be performed at Penn. The Black Arts League then became a group which existed solely to perform theatre about African-American topics and by African-American playwrights. Wilson did not restrict his activities to the Black Arts League, and in 1990 he formed a new group called Black Enlightenment, which performed “gripping drama of African American theater.”⁹⁹ This was not really a group which was intended to last for a long time, but rather just for one production which Wilson wanted to put on outside of Black Arts League. In 1991, the Black Arts League changed its name to the African American Arts Alliance, usually known as 4A, which still exists to this day. The reason for the rebranding, in Wilson’s words, is that “We never liked the name cuz it sounded like a reference to voodoo.”

⁹⁸ If I could be in any performing arts group at Penn that isn’t theatre, it would be Penn Dhamaka, the South Asian dance group. They are a joy to watch.

⁹⁹ 1990 Record

In 1992, Hillel returned to the theatre scene with the brand new Hillel Players, who would eventually change their name to Teatron. According to the 2009 yearbook, Teatron “was founded with the intent of providing Penn students interested in theater with a venue for involvement in Jewish life on campus and enabling Sabbath-observant Jews to participate actively in theater. Teatron also hosts a forum for open discussion and interpretation of Jewish themes relevant to the broader Penn community. Sponsored by the Betty and Philip Zinman Endowment for Jewish Cultural Arts at the University of Pennsylvania and Penn Hillel, the group is open to both undergraduate and graduate Penn students regardless of religious affiliation.” During the 2008-2009 year, the same year that yearbook entry is from, Teatron was kicked out of PAC and TAC-e for accruing too many absences from meetings. The group survived into my freshman year, 2010-2011, but without TAC-e checking up and them and making sure they were on track for their shows, the board lost interest and the group fell apart. This does not always happen when a group is kicked out of TAC-e. 4A was removed from PAC and TAC-e in spring 2012, but they kept on producing theatre and were unanimously voted back into TAC-e in fall 2013, once they had spent the required year outside of the body.

The next cultural theatre group to form, and the third one to ever join the ranks of TAC-e, is PenNaatak, more colloquially known as Naatak. This is a South Asian theatre group, mostly performing plays by South Asian playwrights, some who are Indian-American and some who are from the Indian subcontinent. However, Naatak occasionally performs plays that have nothing to do with South Asia. Their plays often contain actors who are not South Asian, similarly to how 4A and Teatron tended to have at least one person in any given play who was not a member of the group’s culture. I myself acted in a 4A play in 2012, *The African Company Presents Richard III*.¹⁰⁰ Naatak stands out among the TAC-e groups as the most successful at marketing and selling tickets. Their business machine is unmatched in TAC-e, as they print huge numbers of ads in their programs and sell out every show. They also serve samosas and chai at intermission of all their plays, which is a popular tactic. In recent years, Naatak has

¹⁰⁰ I played the evil racist villain, actually.

become a central member of the TAC-e community, and the TAC-e Chair of 2010-2011, Vashisht Garg, came from Naatak.

Only two other cultural groups have been formed at Penn for the sole purpose of performing theatre. One is Penn Chinese Theatre, which was formed in February 2013 and has now existed for two school years. The founders, according to their website¹⁰¹, are named Connie Kang, David Sun, Shuhao Fan, Zhiyi Zhang, Lingbin Cai, Shiqi She, Sophie Chen, Yiran Zhang, Angela Qu, Chole Chen, Clark Cen, Qingying Xia, Tina Xu, Deborah Liao, Gilda Zhao, and Tianyang Chen. The group was created for those interested in “Chinese theatric culture,” and their shows are performed in Chinese. It is too early to guess where this group is headed in the future, but their publicity efforts indicate a group that is not about to fall apart. They are also affiliated with the Penn Chinese Department in some capacity, continuing the century-old tradition of foreign language theatre groups which are supported by the department for their language.

The other cultural theatre group was called Kabachok! The exclamation point was part of the title. Kabachok was to produce Russian plays, presumably in the Russian language, and it is unclear whether or not this group ever successfully performed a play. It seems that there was a series of one acts on 2012. The following post was made by the Penn Russian Club on their Facebook page on September 16, 2012:

A message from Russian Theater:

Dearest comrades,

We are going to assume that as a member of Russian club, you have some interest in Russian culture. So, how about language? And theater? We are happy to let you know about a new part of Russian club starting up - Russian Theater! We are group of students interested in practicing our new or old Russian skills (we have beginners, native speakers, and everything in between) among fun, quirky and theatrically dramatic friends.

This semester we will be putting on a production of "one-

¹⁰¹ <http://www.pennchinesetheater.com/>

acts," with pieces pulling from works by Pushkin, Tolstoy, the Land of Shvambria, and other wonderful inspirations! If you are interested in joining us - please let us know, but do so fast (as time is limited)!

Email [Editor's note: I've removed the individual's name and email] to express interest.

All levels of Russian (we mean it) are welcome. And if you couldn't fit in a Russian language class this semester but still want to do something to practice - here's your chance!

The following post was then made on September 13, 2013:

Dearest comrades,

We are going to assume that as a member of Russian club, you have some interest in Russian culture. So, how about language? And theater? We are happy to let you know about a part of Russian club just for this - Russian Theater! "Kabachok!" is a group of students interested in practicing new or old Russian skills (we have beginners, native speakers, and everything in between) among fun, quirky, and theatrically dramatic friends.

If you are interested in joining, please fill out this form:<http://bit.ly/KabachokInfo>

We will have our General Interest Meeting in the next week.

Thanks!

Kabachok

I emailed and Facebook messaged the person mentioned in the first post and never received a response, so all I can do is guess what happened to Kabachok!, which does not exist at Penn in 2014. My guess is that the one acts happened in 2012, and then the Russian Theater Club decided to give itself a name and try again. But there was likely not enough interest, and the club never took off. This is only a

guess, though, and I cannot say for sure what happened to Kabachok! or whether they ever even performed their one acts in 2012.

In addition to cultural theatre groups, there are also several cultural groups who put up a theatrical performance once a year or once every other year in addition to their ordinary, nontheatrical duties. They are similar in this respect to Golden Age groups such as the Architects Society, Philo, Zelo, the Newman Club, the Classics Club, and more. The most notable of these groups is Club Singapore, which has written an original musical every odd-numbered year since 2007. This musical is huge in scale and moves a large number of tickets. Smaller in scale are the Penn Taiwanese Society and the Vietnamese Student Association's annual plays, which began in 2005 and 2007 respectively. Beginning in 2011, the Penn Philippine Association has had an annual event called Barrio which is a performance involving dancing and other performances, apparently including skits. I have not ever seen any of these groups' performances to ascertain whether or not they are theatre, so I have mentioned them all just in case.

Today, 7 of the 24 groups on campus which perform theatre are cultural in nature. In 1987, none of the 13 theatre groups on campus were cultural groups. Although Teatron has been lost, this trend does not appear to be abating. On the contrary, a new cultural group begins performing theatre every other year or so, and there is no reason to believe that it will stop soon. The Age of TAC-e can just as easily be called the Age of Cultural Theatre based on how many groups have arisen. But as many groups as there are which perform cultural theatre, almost none of them are involved in the Penn theatre community, and most of them do not interact with any other theatre-producing groups at all. Naatak and 4A are the great exceptions to this rule, and it is unlikely that any other groups will be getting into PAC or TAC-e for quite some time.

The Underground Shakespeare Company

While the Age of TAC-e is defined by a core theatre community centered around TAC-e and the rise of cultural theatre, this age has also seen the formation of a few theatre companies which fall outside of those communities. One was created deliberately outside of

PAC so as to not be dependent on SAC funding, and this group is called the Underground Shakespeare Company.

USC was founded in 2001 by Nigel Caplan and Akiva Fox. Caplan arrived at Penn in fall 2001 as a graduate student in the School of Education. Fox was a junior in the College, majoring in English, when he met Caplan at Hillel. Both men had experience with theatre. Caplan had worked on a great many productions at Cambridge, where Fox says “quick-and-dirty productions were often the norm, and where classical material was the bedrock.”¹⁰² Fox had worked on many productions with Penn groups, particularly on musicals and particularly with Singers, but he had grown disillusioned with the focus on money and budgets that had come to take over the SAC-funded Penn groups. He felt that the bureaucracy and the focus on producing big budget productions had gotten in the way of the art, and so he and Caplan decided to make their own group. Cambridge had focused on classical material, and Fox focused on the English Renaissance in his English major, so both men agreed that Shakespeare should be their focus. They took the name Underground Shakespeare Company as they wanted to do cheap shows, focused more on creating a community of actors than on having complicated technical elements. In Fox’s words, “we wanted it to be as unbureaucratic and haphazard as possible.”

The structure of the company was set out in a constitution which they called The Folio. The Folio stated that there would be no board, only one “Nigel” of the company, and that the company would take no SAC money at any point. Fox lived in the Harnwell Arts House and managed to strike a deal with House Dean Dr. Leslie Delauter to make USC the new resident theatre company of Harnwell.¹⁰³ This was only several years after Arts House Theatre Company abandoned Harnwell and changed its name to Front Row Theatre Company. According to Michael DeAngelis, the agreement with Harnwell was that in exchange for performing at least one show in the house per semester, Harnwell would provide “dedicated rehearsal space in the Harnwell Dungeon (underground), dedicated storage space in the form

¹⁰² I had a Gchat conversation with Fox to get most of this information.

¹⁰³ I also had an email conversation with Michael DeAngelis, where I got most of the information about Harnwell and Rodin. DeAngelis works in Career Services at Penn and has been with USC since 2005.

of a hall closet, use of the rooftop lounge for performances, [and] refreshments to be served at intermission” (although DeAngelis says that the refreshments never came through). USC also had an educational outreach component at the start, encouraged by Nigel, who tutored at a high school in West Philadelphia, but this did not last for very long. There was also a string quartet which performed live music in the first couple productions. USC was, and still is, open to more than just students. Staff and faculty at Penn are also encouraged to perform in shows, as are alumni, high school students, and anyone in the city of Philadelphia for that matter. There are no membership restrictions.

USC in its first year was remarkably similar to the modern day USC which I discovered in my sophomore year and become a member of at the start of my junior year. In the spring semester of 2001, USC performed its first play in the Harnwell rooftop lounge, *Twelfth Night, or what you will*. This was followed by a spring Café, in which short scenes from various Shakespeare plays and short original works were presented. The next play was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which was put up on College Green at the very beginning of the following school year on September 14 and 15. Aside from the closeness to September 11th, this production is analogous to the current Fortnight Production which goes up within two weeks of New Student Orientation every year. It may have even been called Fortnight in 2001. Then there was a fall play in the rooftop, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and a fall Café. Caplan directed the first two productions, and Fox produced them. Another important USC figure who was there from the first production is Kate Davis, who remains an active company member in 2014. This pattern of two mainstage plays, a Fortnight outside, and two Cafés is the exact same pattern that is followed in 2014, and it has been in place since day one of USC. The one leadership position in USC is still called “The Nigel,” although there are often Co-Nigels who split the work.

The biggest change that occurred in USC’s history is that they left Harnwell College House and moved to Rodin College House in the 2009-2010 school year. Shortly after USC was started, Dr. Delauter, the House Dean who gave them the space in Harnwell, was promoted to Director of College Houses and Academic Services, and he was replaced as House Dean by Dr. Suhne Ahn. Dr. Ahn had a hands-off approach to USC and never came to any performances. She also took

away some of their resources and began to talk about taking away some of their space, which led USC members to start reconsidering their options. In 2008, the House Dean of Rodin, Ken Grcich, suggested to the perpetually important Michael DeAngelis¹⁰⁴ that USC move to Rodin. In 2009, under the Nigelship of Maura Krause, USC made the move to Rodin. The deal they got was much better than the original Harnwell deal. They still got to keep 100% of their ticket revenue in exchange for performing in the House once a semester, but they also got nearly \$1000 per semester for big items like curtains, and they got their own exclusive classroom on the first floor to use as a rehearsal space, plus a closet for storage. Grcich almost immediately left Penn, but he was replaced by Ryan Keytak, a former actor who held an MFA, and Keytak was extremely amenable to USC. Keytak comes to every show and even appeared in a production of *Much Ado about Nothing*. The faculty master of Rodin, Jay Reise, also comes to see the shows, and the new House Coordinator, Megan Edelman, was a USC-er while a student at Penn. All of this makes USC quite a bit more at home than they were in Harnwell. Interestingly, this now makes two theatre groups which have abandoned Harnwell for the other high rise dorms, and Harnwell is left as the only high rise without its own theatre company.

USC continues being proudly outside of PAC, and their company focus leads to a group of theatre artists who are fiercely loyal to the Company and to each other. USC hasn't changed since it began, and there is no sign that it will any time soon. The members are completely satisfied with the group that they belong to.

Monologues

A new style of theatrical performance has come about at Penn in the last two decades. Penn's Vagina Monologues and the Penn Monologues are Penn standards at this point, and their origin can be traced back to a 1994 play by activist Eve Ensler called *The Vagina Monologues*. Ensler conducted dozens of interviews with women about

¹⁰⁴ USC may not have a board, but there are certain people who are clearly the power players in the group. It changes over time, but Michael has been one of these people for almost ten years.

their vaginas, sexuality, rape, and the social stigmas attached to discussing these issues. The resulting play is a collection of monologues which were taken from these interviews, and it was a hit Off-Broadway for five years, followed by a national tour. On Valentine's Day 1998, Enslin and a few other women established V-Day, an organization based out of New York which stages productions of *The Vagina Monologues* and other works to "use the proceeds for local individual projects and programs that work to end violence against women and girls, often shelters and rape crisis centers."¹⁰⁵ The first V-Day production was in New York, but the organization has spread to cities and college campuses worldwide, encouraging annual productions of the play both to spread the play's message and to raise money. With the emphasis on the money. According to their website, there are over 5800 V-Day events annually as of 2014. The play has evolved over time, and it is hard to call the *Vagina Monologues* one play anymore (I even stopped italicizing it, because referring to it as a play doesn't seem to encompass what the performance is). Monologues are added and replaced, and other elements join the show from year to year, with the individual productions having some control over what they present.

One school that presents the *Vagina Monologues* is Penn, and there has been a chapter of V-Day here since 2001. V-Day UPenn puts up the *Vagina Monologues* in Irvine Auditorium every spring, and in just the past six years, they have raised about \$200,000 for Women Organized Against Rape (WOAR), the only full-service rape crisis center in Philadelphia. The *Vagina Monologues* involve dozens of women at Penn every year, many of them onstage as readers and introducers of the monologues, and many behind the scenes as organizers, tech staff, or fund-raisers. While the performance itself always sells out, and it is quite moving, the emphasis of V-Day UPenn seems to be more on raising money than on producing theatre. Theatre is the means by which money is raised, but the greatest efforts are aimed at selling tickets, selling snacks on Locust Walk (including the

¹⁰⁵ From the V-Day website: <http://www.vday.org/about/why-vday-started#.U6Y2xvmwLhs>

Also, look! We made it to 100 footnotes! We're averaging 1.33 per page right now.

famous chocolate vagina pops), and having a girl in a felt vagina costume on the Walk at all times. Fraternities and Sororities reserve rows at the performance every year, and for them it is essentially a Greek social outing. Students in Greek life get their annual theatre fix, see their friends in the show, mingle with other Greek students in the audience, and go home having supported a good cause. While many women in the Penn theatre community perform in the show, the Vagina Monologues are not necessarily intended to be a part of this community. It is a part of Penn's vibrant community service community more than the theatre community.

For the participants in the Vagina Monologues who care deeply about the content and meaning behind the monologues, there is now another outlet at Penn for them to share personal and emotionally powerful stories with an audience. In spring 2010, the Penn Women's Center started a new annual tradition called the Penn Monologues where students could share their own stories rather than reading the stories of others. These monologues are not restricted to women, and while the theme at the start had to do with sexuality and sex, the monologues now encompass a broader variety of identity issues. In the first production in spring 2010, eleven of the fifteen monologues were delivered by their writers. Today, the monologues are ordinarily performed by different students than the ones who wrote them. With the Penn Monologues, Penn students can now share their own stories with audiences every year, an opportunity that had never been available in the theatre community in the past. I wasn't entirely sure whether VagMons (what the Vagina Monologues are often affectionately called) and the Penn Monologues counted as theatre when I started this history, but their firm place on campus and their inclusion of many women from the broader theatre community suggest that the story of Penn theatre is not complete without mention of monologues.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ I had help from Kate Herzlin, C'14, Pallavi Podapati, C'15, and Dylan Hewitt, C'14, in writing this chapter.

The Current State of Things

Now we come to the point in this history where I have arrived on the scene to witness events firsthand. It is extremely important to note that what you are about to read is a primary source account of the current state of Penn theatre based on my presence in the community from Fall 2010 to Spring 2014. I will try to keep my personal opinions out of this account as much as possible to give you something close to an objective analysis, but frankly, objectivity in history is impossible. One can try to stick only to recorded facts and avoid any interpretation, but the facts were written down for you to read by humans thinking subjectively, as humans are wont to do. You, the reader, will also interpret those words differently than any other human in the world will, giving you a unique interpretation of history that is not objective, but lives solely in your brain. Bear this in mind as you read ahead, and remember that you are not seeing an old alumni's words filtered through my critical lens. You are seeing my own words, and you must act as the filter. Not everyone who currently works in Penn theatre will agree with everything I have to say, but for the most part, I'll try to say things that are difficult to object to.

The Further Centralization of TAC-e

When I arrived at Penn in August 2010, TAC-e groups were closer to each other than DAC, ACK, or SMAC groups were to their own companions. This was largely a result of TAC-e's shared casting and lack of notable individual group membership. But while TAC-e was one broad community, it was not particularly tight-knit. Players, Front Row, Quadramics, and iNtuitons were quite close, with actors and techies regularly auditioning or interviewing for all four groups, going from one group to the next with each passing semester. I very quickly noticed this trend in my freshman year, and took to calling those groups "The Big Four." As far as I could tell, no one else involved in Penn theatre had ever used the phrase "Big Four" or anything like it, but whenever I slipped the term into conversation, other TAC-e people would always understand exactly which groups I was referring to, usually without needing to ask. The fact that these four groups were the core of TAC-e was universally understood.

The remaining three TAC-e groups were quite different from the Big Four. While the Big Four had the same basic board positions, tech positions, and show seasons, the other three had key differences. Stimulus Children's Theatre only produced one play every year, with the other semester spent working on a theatre workshop for local children. 4A had a company-based structure, where members would be admitted to the company permanently. This created a very strong sense of community in 4A, minimizing the emphasis on the board which other TAC-e groups had come to have. Naatak came to focus on business and ticket sales as their core mission, with an extremely aggressive and successful campaign each semester to sell out their play. But the main reason that these three TAC-e groups (and Teatron two years before my arrival) were isolated from the Big Four was because they simply were satisfied being their own, independent communities apart from the central one. This is essentially how dance and a capella groups operate, with each group forming its own community, and the interaction between groups being minimal. 4A, Naatak, and Stim were not able to completely operate independently, as they had to send a board member to work on Small Fall and One Acts (4A members even performed an entire one act on their own in the 2011 show), but for the most part, you would either audition for just one of those groups or else multiple Big Four shows. It was uncommon to audition for Big Four shows and any of the others, although Stim did have a small degree of overlap with the Big Four in the years leading up to my arrival.

In 2010, the TAC-e chair position was not extremely powerful. There existed nothing in the TAC-e bylaws which specified the duties of the TAC-e chair, and most groups would have very little interaction with the chair as their term went by. For the most part, the TAC-e chair would work with Ty Furman to arrange rehearsal space, lead the mandatory TAC-e meeting every month, and be a go-between for individual TAC-e groups and the administration (in the form of Ty). The TAC-e chair was not a leader of the community, and they were not necessarily more powerful than any individual chair of a TAC-e group. It was easy to spend your time on a group's board without ever giving much thought to the TAC-e chair, and everyone was satisfied with this arrangement. When I was a freshman, I quickly decided that I wanted to have the most important position possible in TAC-e by the time I was a senior. While the TAC-e chair technically outranked all other

students in TAC-e, it seemed very obvious to me that the group chairs wielded more actual power on the ground. Players was the group that attracted me the most, so I set my sights for Players chair without ever considering that TAC-e chair might be a worthwhile position.

But I have witnessed a culture shift in my time, resulting in more centralization of TAC-e than ever. This is a result of both the inward movement of the groups and the presence of an important figure, the 2013-2014 TAC-e chair, Kelly-Ann Corrigan, C'14. First, the movement of the groups. In the past four years, Stim has altered itself to become a core TAC-e group in the style of Players, Quadramics, Front Row, and iNtuitions. In fall 2011, Stim performed its first musical in many years, *Schoolhouse Rock: The Musical!* and followed it up with a play in the spring. This taxed their finances, as Stim had only been doing one show a year previously. But they have now repeated the fall musical and spring play formula for three years in a row, and there is no sign that they plan to stop. Stim also altered their board positions to match the positions of the “Big Four” more closely, and they also switched board elections from the winter to the spring, when the other TAC-e groups have them. By the end of my sophomore year, many TAC-e actors, myself included, began to add Stim to the list of groups to audition for every semester, and it became apparent that the Big Four had become a Big Five.

Over the past year, Pennaatak has also moved dramatically into the core community, to the point where any talk of a “Big Five” no longer makes sense. Multiple Naatak members consistently work on other TAC-e shows, and multiple people from other TAC-e groups consistently work on Naatak shows. Three separate members of the new 2014-2015 Naatak board have worked on other TAC-e groups' shows besides One Acts. One person, Ahmed Mohieldin, C'17, is even on two TAC-e boards at once: Naatak and iNtuitions. It is possible that someone being on two TAC-e boards is not a first, but I have never heard of such a thing before. Seth Rozin was Players Chair and Arts House Chair at the same time, but this was before TAC-e existed, when each group was more independent. Players Board and Singers Board have shared members without any difficulty, so I doubt there will be any difficulty from this situation.

But perhaps just as important to the closeness of the TAC-e groups has been the career of one particular Penn student, Kelly-Ann

Corrigan. It is possible that recency has led me to overstate her importance to the history of Penn theatre, and it is also likely that my friendship with Ms. Corrigan affects my analysis of her role in the community, but it is undeniable that the position of TAC-e chair has fundamentally changed under her tenure. She was responsible for creating Meet and Theat(re), creating a TAC-e formal, and creating a TAC-e alumni event at Homecoming. She also was the leading voice behind bringing 4A back into TAC-e, urging everyone to vote for them in what needed to be a unanimous vote. In addition, she was very willing to help the groups whenever they were having crises. In my first three years at Penn, if some huge issue happened in Penn Players, the Players chair would never even think to ask the TAC-e chair for help, because what could the TAC-e chair possibly do that Players couldn't do itself? In my senior year, I relied on Kelly-Ann a great deal whenever we were having one of our many disasters. The TAC-e chair is now expected to take a leading role in the community, whereas they once were just an administrator. Although I cannot be certain what the future holds, I strongly suspect that this change in the role of the TAC-e chair will be an enduring one. The current TAC-e chair, Meg MacInnes, C'15, has so far been leading the community just as well as Kelly-Ann, according to my sources at Penn.

Shifting Roles

The roles of the various TAC-e groups in the Penn theatre community have shifted considerably even since the founding of TAC-e. Take, for example, Quadramics. When Q was founded in 1973, it was positioned as the only student-directed alternative to the Penn Players. From the outset, they advertised themselves as more fun than Players, and the Fling show was the centerpiece of their season. Being student-directed is what defined them, though, more than anything else. Today, there are seven TAC-e groups, and six of them are student-directed. There are also numerous non-TAC-e student-directed theatre groups. This makes Q's mission of being a student-directed theatre group no longer enough to define their place in the community. To compensate for the loss of what formerly set them apart, they have embraced a new identity as the most fun and social TAC-e group. This makes sense in light of their longstanding association with Spring

Fling, a very social event. Q likes to have the reputation of having the best social events and the coolest board. Their fall show, always described as a “dark comedy,” tends to be a recent ensemble play with youngish characters, often involving the introduction of a problem like race, sexuality, or politics into a formerly stable setting. This trend in their fall shows is very recent, but it represents the current status quo.

The move of Quadramics away from being the default student directed theatre group left an empty space into which another theatre company could move. Although Front Row Theatre Company is technically the “socially relevant” theatre group with an emphasis on community service, in actuality, the role they fill in the theatre community is that of the default, gimmick-less theatre company. I say this not to dismiss Front Row, but rather to give them credit for the absolutely central role they play in Penn theatre. To illustrate why they are the default group, imagine that you are a student hoping to direct a play at Penn. Just any old play, maybe by Tracy Letts, maybe by Arthur Miller, maybe by George Bernard Shaw. You can’t propose that play to Players, as Players only hires professional directors. You can’t go to iNtuitons unless you have an experiment in mind, and most directors don’t. You can’t go to Stim unless it’s a children’s show. The odds are that your play won’t fit as a Q dark comedy unless you’re specifically looking for one. And if you have a musical in mind, most are too small or not raucous enough for Fling. So who do you propose to? Front Row. More students propose to Front Row than to any other company, also because FTC is the only company at Penn to put up four full productions each year. The fall and spring shows are plays, and the NSO (New Student Orientation) and winter shows can be either plays or musicals, but are musicals more often than not.¹⁰⁷ Plus, in the NSO and winter seasons, Front Row is the only theatre group on campus putting on a full length show, so they tend to draw upon the best talent for both the casts and technical staffs. And regarding FTC’s requirement that every play be socially relevant, an argument can be made that every play ever written is socially relevant. The closest thing that FTC has to a legitimate gimmick is community service, but that

¹⁰⁷ Any Front Row show can technically be either a play or a musical, but this is how it realistically turns out every year due to the musical competition in the fall and spring seasons and lack of musical competition in the smaller seasons.

has no tangible effect on the choice and production of their shows. It is an ex post gimmick.

So today, FTC is the true student-directed counterpart to Players, as these are the only two TAC-e groups focused solely on choosing the best plays and musicals they can without having to adhere to any one specific genre or style of theatre. This is not to say that Players or FTC put up higher quality theatre than other Penn groups. Almost any observer would agree that TAC-e shows are roughly equal in quality. But FTC is definitely the “normal” theatre group in 2014, and Players is the professionally-directed “normal” theatre group.

When iNtuitons began, it was almost as much performance art as theatre. Although they settled down into putting up a play in Houston nearly every semester, they have not lost their experimental spark. Some experiments make novel use of Houston, such as in the 2005 show, when iNtuitons collaborated with Stimulus Children’s Theatre to produce a version of *Alice in Wonderland* where the audience was Alice. A maze of rooms was constructed in the Class of 1949 Auditorium, and the audience walked through it as the play went on. The settling down of iNtuitons into a somewhat more traditional theatre company probably has to do with the centralization of TAC-e into seven groups with a pool of actors and techies who move freely from group to group. As a result, there isn’t one solid group of die-hard iNtuitons actors and techies who want experimental theatre and nothing else. This system makes TAC-e very healthy and integrated, but it diminishes how unique any one member group can be. Still, iNtuitons will often do dramatic experiments like performing a tired old Agatha Christie play in the commedia dell’arte style or creating a tavern from scratch and serving the audience drinks while the actors move freely around the space. Their Fall 2014 play was a devised piece which was written during the rehearsal process by director Joanna Glum, C’16, and the actors. The show regarded how social media shapes society, and the positive and negative effects of these changes. It was undeniably an extremely experimental show by TAC-e standards, and iNtuitons shows no signs of slowing down.

New Frontiers

Cultural theatre is not the only area in which more shows are being produced. Older groups are experimenting with new types of productions, and several new groups have arisen in recent years that are not related to culture or monologues. In TAC-e, staged readings have been held in abundance lately. Front Row had a partnership with the Kelly Writer's House for several years called the Front Row Theatre Company Playwriting Fellowship where a chosen student playwright would get \$500 and the opportunity to see their play put up by Front Row in the Heyer Rooftop Lounge of Harrison as a staged reading. This reading would always occur on or near reading days shortly before Spring final exams. This continued up through 2013, but in 2014 the Kelly Writer's House abruptly broke off the partnership and instead paired with the Theatre Arts Program for the playwriting competition, leaving Front Row without a reading.

Beginning in 2012, also during reading days, Players decided to get in on the staged reading action. Incoming Chair Anya Lichtenstein, C'13, had a play she wanted to direct, so she grabbed her actor friends and put it on as a staged reading in the Platt Performing Arts House lobby stage. The next year, incoming Chair me decided to repeat that with another full length play. I felt like Players' reading was inadequate compared to the other groups, all of which had some sort of gimmick. In the absence of any better ideas, I decided that Players should only do readings of plays by up-and-coming female playwrights, and I had fellow Board member Kate Herzlin suggest some to me. I directed a play called *Impenetrable* by Mia McCullough about a white woman, played by outgoing Chair Ms. Lichtenstein, who starts to wear a hijab.

In 2014, as I was on my way out of Board, I had the idea to make the Players reading a collaboration with the Philomathean Society. Philo hadn't done any theatre since the two infamous outings in 2008 and 2009 (the 2009 show was a version of Julius Caesar in the Houston Hall of Flags where the actor playing Caesar, Alec Webley, notoriously forgot most of his lines, although he disputes this story when asked), and I decided that it was time for Philo to get back in the game. In just the past year, Philo went from having only one member who had ever been in a Penn theatre show to five, with many more

Philos becoming familiarized with the theatre community. By the time the reading was held (we actually succeeded in obtaining the coveted “shortly before but not during reading days” spot due to the lack of competition from Front Row and iNtuitions that year; if we went head to head with Tharts, no one noticed), I was no longer Players Chair, but I was the Chair of the Philomathean Society’s Performance Committee. After an entire year of promising Philo a staged reading and delivering nothing, I finally put together a nice afternoon in Philo’s meeting room. Ella Duangkaew, C’15, and Mikie Sakanaka, C’17, of Players Board co-directed a ten minute one act called *10,000 Cigarettes* by Alex Broun. They cast some of the leading ladies of Penn theatre in the play. I followed it with a 17th Century Spanish Catholic morality play called *El Gran Teatro Del Mundo* by Calderon de la Barca, which I had enjoyed reading in a class. It would otherwise have no avenue to the stage anywhere at Penn, as it isn’t quite the sort of play that other groups look for. Philos, however, have long expressed an interest in doing obscure old European theatre. I cast eight or nine Philos, several of whom had never acted before, and it was a huge hit. The next Chair and Treasurer and iNtuitions, Alex Polyak, C’15, and Jeremy Cohen, C’17, respectively, are Philos, so I have high hopes for Philo’s continued dabbling in theatre in the future. I also gave a half hour PowerPoint version of this book as a litex at a Philo meeting. So I take some credit for a renewed Philo interest in theatre and a renewed theatre interest in Philo, and this is one of the things that I am most proud of from my time at Penn.

iNtuitions entered the reading game in a big way in 2013 for one year only. Hannah Van Sciver, C’14, had already entered the Philadelphia theatre scene as an actor by her junior year, and she wanted to put her contacts to good use by having three local playwrights work with three student directors and student actors to put up staged readings of their plays. This was called The First Annual iNtuitions Reading, and it was held on August 30, 2013 in the Rodin Underground. The plays were *Core Sample* by Emma Goidel, *Pistrix* by Annie R. Such, and *Arbitrary* by Brian Grace-Duff. Grace-Duff also was in his final year of working at the Annenberg Center, where he was an enormous help to all student shows that took there. I personally acted in *Pistrix* and *Arbitrary*. After the readings, there was a talkback moderated by local playwright and sometime Penn lecturer Jackie

Goldfinger where the audience could ask questions to the playwrights. Although the reading was very successful and was supposed to become an annual tradition, planning it and getting the professional playwrights took a tremendous amount of effort and planning by Van Sciver, and the next year's iNtuitions board was unfortunately too small in size to coordinate something like it again.

Moving away from readings, there are a few more theatre events on campus that I haven't mentioned yet. Players added another opportunity for theatre in January 2007 with their first 24-Hour Theatre Festival. Each January, three or four teams create and stage an entire short play in 24 hours. The writers begin at 8pm the night before the performance and have their first drafts complete by midnight. In the morning, the directors take the final drafts and stage the shows with the actors in any rehearsal space they can get. Platt rooms are ideal, but apartments have been known to see some action. In the winter of 2012, a blizzard kept the entire writing staff and many of the actors trapped in the Van Sciver family's apartment overnight and through the next morning. By around 6pm, a dress rehearsal is held in Platt, which is where the final performance is held at 8pm. 24-Hour is a popular offering by Players, usually attracting people from many TAC-e groups and beyond.

Quadramics also has an annual winter tradition called MisQast, based on the popular Miscast event at the MCC Theater in New York. Actors are encouraged to sing songs or read monologues/dialogues in roles that they'd never get cast in. This is mostly men singing women's songs and vice versa, although sometimes there are people singing songs that were written for a different race, or techies singing any songs at all. This tradition started in the 2010/11 school year, and has continued each year since.

Besides Philo, one other new player has entered the theatre game in the past few years that isn't a cultural group. This is the Penn Sirens, the newest female version of the Glee Club. The first Women's Glee Club existed from the 1910s until 1953, and then when it was revived in 1957, Bruce Montgomery eventually took the group in a different direction, creating the co-ed Penn Singers. This has left a huge unfilled niche on campus since the 1970s, and Sirens filled it in 2011. They sing "everything from pop to choral, folk to jazz, show tunes to

alternative¹⁰⁸” both a capella and with their own band. In addition to their vocal performances, they, like Glee, perform musical-style shows with acting and dancing, although they perform these shows once per semester instead of only in the spring like Glee. Glee has their annual collaboration with Penn Dance in the fall semester where Glee will come on to sing, then Penn Dance will come on to dance, and sometimes the groups do those activities simultaneously.

While I worked on this book, I was also starting the Pennsylvania Players Alumni Club (PPAC). Mask and Wig, Glee, and Philo all have very successful alumni clubs, and I often wondered why Players did not have one, considering that we are also a very old group with a distinguished list of alumni. I had long harbored this thought, but I did not act on it until Vanessa Lam, C’15, my replacement as Players Chair, approached me with the same idea a day or two before she took over. Since then I have worked with Penn Alumni to create PPAC, which already has 220 members. My plan is for PPAC to encourage alumni to attend Players shows, and also for alumni to meet up at separate PPAC events. PPAC and Players had a small reception before the Fall 2014 production of *Gypsy* which was attended by many recent graduates, so PPAC is moving forward on the right foot.

And with that, we’ve covered just about everything.

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.dolphin.upenn.edu/sirens/about.html>

Conclusion

Penn theatre has come a long way since the Masque of Alfred in 1757. In that time, 62 groups that I know of have performed theatre at Penn, and it is likely that I did not catch every single one. But some things have not changed in that entire span of time. Since that first performance, things have been invented like household electricity, radio, movies, TV, the Internet, and even America. But throughout all that, students have never lost the desire to make theatre. There will always be Penn students who want to create new worlds on the stage.

Why did I write this history? Because thousands of Penn students have worked on theatrical productions while they attended the University. Some were onstage, some were backstage, and some never touched a stage at all but still played a part in bringing a show before an audience. My hope is that each and every one of those people, were they to read this book, would find something that is interesting to them. I couldn't possibly tell all the stories that Penn theatre alumni hold dear when they remember their time at the school. But I can record the basic facts surrounding each and every student theatre group to ever exist on campus, a goal which has never even been attempted before. I am sure I missed a great deal of information which I would have included had I known about it. Perhaps there can be a second edition if enough people point out to me what I missed. But as it stands, this history is the most complete telling of the story of Penn theatre that has ever existed, and I wrote it because I felt that I owed it to the community which took me in and made my four years at Penn so wonderful. I hope you enjoyed reading (or skimming) this book. Alumni, I hope that it brings you wonderful memories of your time in Penn theatre. Current Penn students, I hope that this will bring you a better understanding of the community you are a part of, and how it got to where it is today. Please do not lose sight of this history, and please make sure that future generations of Penn students are able to know what came in the years after I published this book.

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