

St. Luke's Players History

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

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

From the earliest days it has been the object of the Players to produce (in the words of Harry Lukey) "good, clean plays for your enjoyment". The very first production was "Our Hearts are Young and Gay" by Cornelia Otis Skinner. Other well-known productions include "This Happy Breed", "See How They Run" (three times), "The Glass Menagerie", "Angel Street", "Murder at the Vicarage", and "An Ideal Husband". The old-fashioned "mellerdrama" was always a favorite with audiences, examples being "Lily the Felon's Daughter", "Dirty Work at the Crossroads", and two originals by the Players own Betty Jeanpierre, "Curses, Foiled Again and Again" and "A Fate Worse Than Death"; the latter being revived to celebrate our fortieth anniversary. For many years the Players entered the B.C. Drama Festival invariably coming away with several honours. In 1986 they presented at Government House an enactment of the presentation of the petition to found the B.C. Provincial Museum.

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

Over the years, St. Luke's Players has contributed much to the Church. Each year at least 80% of the net profits are handed over in lieu of rent. In 1999 the amount was \$8000. In addition, the Players have upgraded the stage facilities by purchasing new stage curtains and new front curtains. Recently, aided by their audiences, they have provided the hall with 120 new, attractive, comfortable chairs. The year 1999 marked the 50th anniversary of the Players, and they are confident that they will continue for at least another fifty.

By Dennis Kershaw and Kay Averill
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