

A historical look at the Schmeckfest musicals: 1967-2024

With complete program information from every show!

All proceeds go toward Freeman Academy

The Author's Introduction

My introduction to the Schmeckfest stage was somewhat unique.

Back in 1977, when I was a freshman at Freeman Junior College (FJC), if you were a college student and wanted to only be in the chorus of a Schmeckfest musical, all you had to do was sign up on the sign-up sheet at school and show up for the first practice. Not only had I never been on stage, I actively avoided it throughout my high school years, but FJC student Gwen Doerksen wrote my name down along with Tony Waltner, Steve Mendel and Stan Ortman (her future husband). I have no idea why but we all went to the practice for "The Gondoliers," and while the other guys were in and out of a few other productions, I was hooked. Now, 46 years later, I haven't missed one. So depending on my mood I either give Gwen credit or blame for the situation.

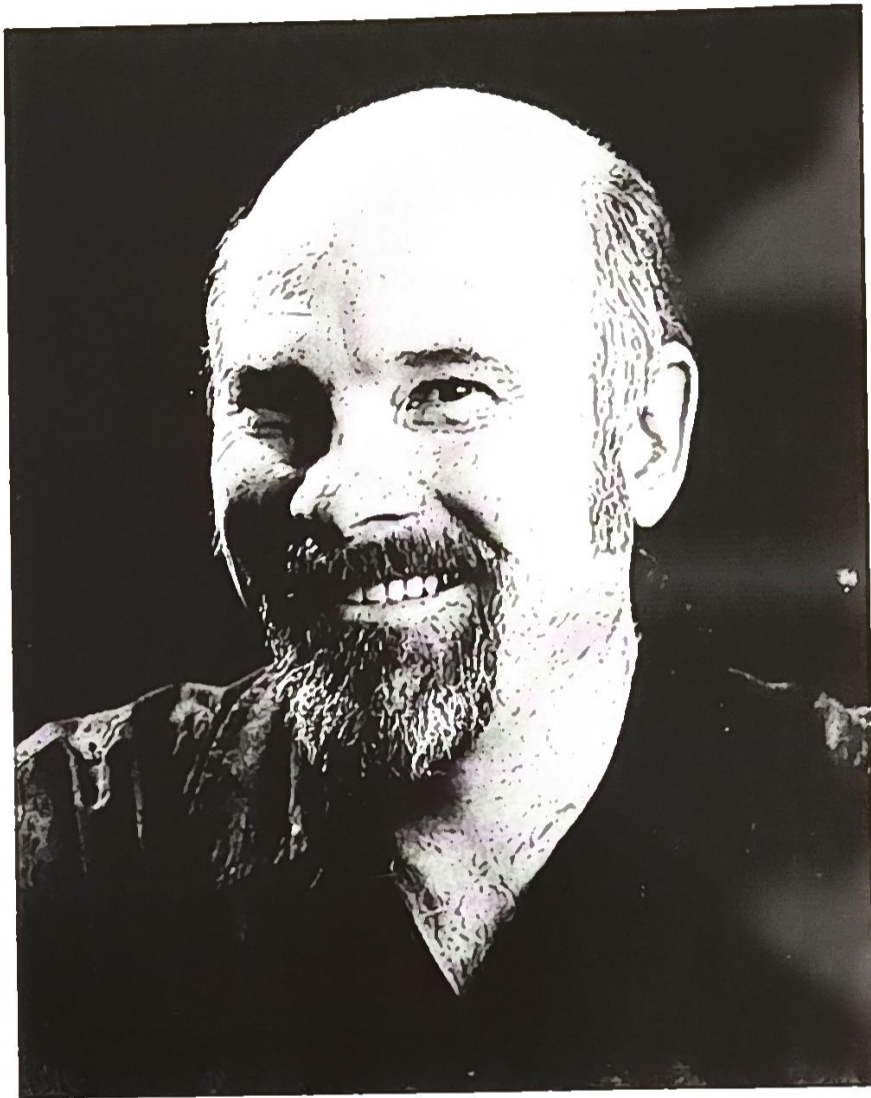
When I had done an astronomical total of 10 or 12 in a row I had some young people brag that they would beat my record. Well, they learned two things:

1. They grow up and get a life, and;
2. I have to stop before they can start catching up.

One of my favorite things is when the cast gets to see the program for the first time at dress rehearsal and how many turn to the crossword page to check if they made the puzzle. The smiles and excitement from some who are in it help offset some of the disappointment from those who didn't make it. All I can tell them is go out next year and maybe it will happen. I have had people request to be in it, and while I keep it in mind, I can't make any promises. The requests and disappointment came to a head in 2017's "Brigadoon," so I created a super-sized crossword which included every cast member in either the clues or the puzzle itself, which I made available to everyone at the cast party. This is included in this book as a Bonus Puzzle.

As for the crossword part of the Schmeckfest program I had been in a number of musicals when someone who shall remain nameless created one for the program. And while I have always loved crossword puzzles I had never created one but I knew I could do better. So after talking to the Program Committee they let me do one in 1986 for "110 in the Shade." And while looking back at it now I can see how crude it was I am still proud of it.

I have had a few crossword connoisseurs who tell



Monte Waltner's headshot from 2009's "Into The Woods."

I am not making them correctly (one and two letter answers; no duplicating blacked out squares) but my goal has always been to get as many starred clues (*Answers can be found in the program) to make the audience read through the program while waiting for the show to start. I have gone from less than 20 starred clues in the early years to usually in the mid 40s currently. And with this Crossword Puzzle Book and you having access to all the past show information available I have even exceeded 50 starred clues a couple of times, that's with an average of around 63 total clues per crossword.

When I decided to put everything together in this book I felt that every Schmeckfest needed to be represented, so I had an additional 20 crossword puzzles to create for the earlier shows. Each crossword takes 5 to 9 hours for me to create and make ready to submit for the program. This book also needed to have all the original programs information available for the starred clues, so there were countless hours typing in *cast, chorus, orchestra,*

3. MOCHA CAKE & DO YOU REMEMBER? 1969

ACROSS

- *1. Luella actress
- *3. She is on the Makeup Committee
- *9. **Mocha Cake** author
 - 11. Desert in East Asia
- *13. **Guys & Dolls** 2005: Clarinet player (init.)
- 14. Relating to the ear
- *16. **Camelot** 1984: A knight's title role
- *17. Rev. V. ___ Gerig
- *18. **The Wizard of ___**
- *19. She is an usher
- *21. German tasting festival island
- *25. **110 in ___ Shade**
 - 26. Christmas song
 - 27. Rochester Area Lacrosse League (abbr.)
- *29. Reverend Gerig's middle initial
- 30. Economic Research Service (abbr.)
- 32. Author ___ Stanley Gardner
- *33. Mrs. Edna Graber's role
- 36. Second Line Of Response (abbr.)
- *37. He takes tickets
- 39. Silicon (abbr.)
- 40. Official Software Update Service (abbr.)
- *42. **The King and ___**
- *43. **Joseph** 2010: Journey to ___; song
- *44. He is an usher

- *15. **Mocha** ___
 - 20. National Football League (abbr.)
- *22. Don Waltner's role
- *23. ___ **Dolly**
 - 24. Emerge, appear
- *28. A ticket taker
- *30. Donald Hofman's
 - 31. Scandinavian woven rug
- *34. Title for Beatrice Barefacts actress
- *35. **Children of Eden**: Ain't ___ Good; song
 - 38. Cyclades
- *41. 1974 musical (abbr.)

***Answers can be found in the program**

DOWN

- *1. Mrs. John C. Graber's role
- *2. ___ **Pinafore**
 - 3. A period of flowering, blossom
- *4. He is an usher
- 5. Coastal Enterprise Inc. (abbr.)
- *6. Emily actress (init.)
- *7. **Plain and Fancy** 1971: She plays Sarah
- *8. ___ **of Penzance**
- *10. Mrs. Isaac ___ Walter
- 12. Butterflies in the Stomach (abbr.)

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DO YOU REMEMBER? & MOCHA CAKE 1969

Do You Remember?

CAST

Emily ----- Mrs. Edna Graber
Betsy ----- Mrs. Mildred Schrag

PHOTOGRAPHS

Beatrice Barefacts ----- Mrs. Dorothy Epp
Teacher and Pupil ----- Ethel and Waldo Kaufman
Seamstress ----- Mrs. John C. Graber
Jennie and family ----- Gene Waltner family
Luella and Vivian -- Mrs. Sarah Hofer, Mrs. Isaac I Walter
Charlie and Jane ----- Ruby and Don Waltner
Gertie ----- Ruth Waltner
Minister and wife ----- Rev. and Mrs. V. M. Gerig
Grandma ----- Ms. A. V. Tieszen

Acknowledgements ----- Tom Preheim
Mrs. Wm. Tschetter
Mr. and Mrs. Larry Krehbiel
Do You Remember? author ----- Ethel Rice

Mocha Cake

CAST

Elmer ----- Donald Hofman
Mary ----- Anita Kramer
Mrs. Hill ----- Dellene Becker

MISCELLANIOUS INFORMATION

Directed by Miss Katherine Kaufman
Lights ----- Wally Kramer
Make-up ----- Sharon Saner, Anita Kramer
Dellene Becker
Tickets ----- John P. Kleinsasser, LeRoy Hofer
Marlo Ortman, John Waltner
Ushers ---- Anita Miller Jorgiann Waltner
Jackie Stucky Dale Hofer
Dennis Merk Allen Eitzen
Stanley Quiring Arlo Hofer
Ray Wipf Harris Deckert
Mocha Cake author ----- Emilie Petersen

Famous ad-libs

The Music Man of 1979: A bat was flying around the auditorium during one of the performances, it would swoop through on stage and over the audience at times. During a scene in the park Mayor Shinn (John R. Waltner) was giving a speech when the bat swooped through and John casually threw in the line “Darn birds” and continued on with his lines. It brought a chuckle from the crowd both on stage and in the audience.

110 in the Shade of 1986: The Freeman area was having an exceptionally wet spring that year with heavy rains during Schmeckfest. Interestingly enough the musical that year was about record drought and Greg Kleinsasser’s role of Bill Starbuck was trying to convince the townfolk that he could bring rain. Greg’s line was “The last place I brought rain was Oklahoma”. Well Greg changed it one night to “The last place I made it rain was Freeman, South Dakota.” This brought laughter from the audience and after it died down he added “and it’s still raining”. This absolutely brought the house down with laughter.

Another backstage memory

In Brigadoon 1989 Mark Miller was both a Brigadoon resident who wears a kilt and at the end of the show Frank, a bartender in New York. His bartender scene was a bit of a quick change so Mark only switched his top half of the costume and kept the kilt on because he only stood behind the bar. Also behind the bar was a set piece not required to be completed below the bar height so the bottom 3 feet were open behind it. This gave some of the cast members the opportunity to reach through and tickle Mark’s exposed legs with feathers while the scene was going on. To his credit he never broke character but he did not appreciate the distraction.

SCHMECKFEST BASCKSTAGE MEMORIES

DISCLAIMER: I am putting this right at the front and not in small print at the end of the article. These memories are accurate and true to the best of my recollections. I have checked with a few people on certain stories and no one has contradicted me. They have even sometimes been able to add more background information. The biggest discrepancies were whether it was at practice or during performance. Just remember memories can get fuzzy, which is good that I am finally writing them down. And away we go.

1. During the 1979 production of *The Music Man* the scene of the Paroo house back porch had a two person swing. We had to drop chains down from the heavens, our term for the area above the stage, to hook the swing onto. At a practice the week of performance Tony Waltner and I were in charge of dropping the chains and when the scene started with Marion Paroo (Karen Graber) sitting on the swing we started hoisting swing up and by the time she noticed, she was already 6 feet off the ground, too high to jump off. Needless to say the scene ended with her scream. At another practice of the same scene I grabbed the one chain and slid down and ended up sitting beside her, that also ended with a scream.

2. In *Camelot* following an off stage scene where Kirk Preheim's character, Sir Lionel is killed he is carried on stage on a stretcher and Lancelot (Greg Kleinsasser) takes Sir Lionel's hand, puts it to his face and prays over the body. Kirk got this idea to put catfish bait (commonly called stink bait) on his hand. The men new about it but Greg did not. This was a practice the week of the show and we were already in full costume, probably getting to late to be screwing around. When the body came on stage and Greg put the hand to his face and we could see him trying not to react to the smell the rest of us were trying unsuccessfully to keep from laughing. While it was hilarious to us the director (John R. Waltner) did not see the humor. He stopped the scene, chewed us out and told us practice was over and to go home. I have seen director's upset but he was mad.

3. In *Fiddler on the Roof* 1972 I vividly remember that in the last scene as Tevye (John R. Waltner) and Golde (Nita Engbrecht) turn to follow their fellow Jews to another home there were rings of Schmeckfest sausage hanging on the back of their cart. After the show there was discussion about the believability of Jewish people having pork sausage. An interesting last night change that created some debate.

4. A memory that always makes me smile happened in the 1990 production of *Kiss Me, Kate*. Steve Graber (First Gangster) and Larry Schmidt (Second Gangster) sang their crowd pleasing song "Brush Up You Shakespeare" and at some point during the song Steve would subtly give a slight tug and adjust himself. The whole cast would be glued to the back-stage monitor watching and waiting and give out a big laugh each night after it happened. At the end of the last performance Steve was asked about his "bit" and he had no clue what we were talking about. He did it subconsciously every night and it just added more humor to the song.

5. During an actual performance of *The King and I*, the opening scene is of Anna and her son sailing to Siam with the main stage set up as a ship with a 3 foot high railing upstage representing the ship. Well the stage crew got the brilliant idea to portray shark infested waters so a piece of plywood was cutout to look like a sharks fin and they tied my feet together with a long rope, put me on a cart and as I lay flat on my back they pulled me across stage behind the railing with me holding the plywood fin high enough above the railing to be seen by the audience.



Steve Graber & Larry Schmidt in *Kiss Me, Kate*

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