

# PLAY GUIDE



## Picnic

By William Inge

Labor Day weekend in the early 1950's, in a small Kansas town. This is the age of sock hops, hot rods, Father-Knows-Best family structure and twin beds -- a world of strict moral and social behavior with little tolerance for any deviation. Winner of the 1953 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, the New York Drama Critics Award and the Outer Critics Circle Award, *Picnic* paints a classic 1950s portrait of ordinary people living ordinary lives in small town America. The "playwright of the Midwest" offers a nostalgic look at the exhilaration and pain of taking risks. In the words of *Picnic*'s young Millie Owens, "...kind of warm inside and sad and amused, all at the same time."

***Suitable for all ages.***

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# Picnic

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# From the Director

Alienation, conformity, compromise, hypocrisy, conflict, love. Wow, that's quite a basketful for one production but, yep, hold onto your hats, folks...we've got 'em all. Inge imbues his plays with all these ingredients and more. His artistry is in slowly revealing the minimal, commonplaceness of characters involved in and overwhelmed by the repetitiveness of their daily lives. He makes this "unfolding" a directly emotional experience for the audience, illustrating the unexpected in human nature. I admire his artistry. His subtlety in portraying a world populated by people alienated from each other, his deftness in painting a world where conformity is crucial to survival, and his mastery in creating a community of disparate souls looking for acceptance and love has always held a fascination for me.

I grew up in the Midwest, in eastern Kansas to be exact, and though I have been away for many years, I remember snatches of that life. I remember the small towns I grew up in, went to college in, married and had children in. I remember the fierce independence and self-reliance of the people, the big dreams and the small joys. I recall humid days, sunshine and the taste of dust on the end of my tongue as the breeze blew across my face. I remember the smell of mud, and wet, and wood as I watched the Missouri river roll sluggish and brown through the high, white bluffs on a hazy, hot day. I remember it, even in my escape from it.

Everyone dreams of escape. Everyone dreams of finding their place in the world. Everyone dreams of being loved. Inge believed the journey was not so much in the action of the journey but, ultimately, in the emotional human experience we all go through in our quest for that love. This journey is the essential root of his realism and why we continue to be fascinated with his characters. For Inge, changing the experiential lives of his audience and getting them to open their minds and their hearts to the possibility of non-judgmental love of their fellow human beings was the ultimate journey. Sadly, it was a dream he never found for himself, but his work can still speak for him. It can still inspire to us to look beneath the surface. It can still remind us to be open to possibilities...and love.

Judith Allen  
Director



**JUDITH ALLEN** was named 2002 Best Supporting Actress in a Comedic Role by *The Denver Post* for her role as Chris Gorman in OpenStage Theatre's production of *Rumors* and most recently was seen as Leigh Sangold in *Splitting Infinity*. She currently serves as the Associate Artistic Director for OpenStage, a Producing Artistic Director for *openstage etc* and sits on the Theatre's Board of Directors. Her numerous directing credits include recent productions of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *The Drawer Boy* (OpenStage OPUS Award for Best Play and Best Director), *Romeo and Juliet* (OPUS for Best Director), *Henry IV Part I*, *The Living* and *My Three Angels*. Some of Judith's favorite roles with OpenStage include Elenora Duse in *The Ladies of the Camellias*, Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (OpenStage OPUS Award for Best Actress), Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* and Lizzie Morden in *Our Country's Good*. She is a member of Rabbit Hole Radio Theatre, a producer for *openstage etc* and has designed sound and make-up for numerous productions. She received the 2001 OpenStage Founder's Award for her exceptional contributions to the Theatre.

## Picnic The Play



In 1946, Inge wrote a play called *Front Porch*, which the Experimental Group of the St. Louis Community Players planned to produce. The Players folded before the play was performed. The basic theme still enthralled Inge, and in the summer of 1950 he decided to redraft this less than perfect manuscript into a finished play. Retitled *Picnic*, the play won a Pulitzer Prize, the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, The Outer Circle Award, The Theatre Club Award, and the Donaldson Prize in 1953.

He wanted his new play to take place in the sunshine, and he wanted one of the main characters to have the kind of surging vitality and overt sexuality he had noticed in members of the Kansas road gang he worked with in the summer of 1936.

*Picnic* also carried forward from the original play beautifully crafted sketches of women living humdrum lives in a small Kansas town. The women create a world of their own, one without men. Hal, a muscular, dumb but lovable lout with a heavy load of sheer animal magnetism spends one day among

the women and takes their lives down unexpected paths.

"I want my plays," Inge said, "to provide the audience with an experience which they can enjoy...and which shocks them with the unexpected in human nature, with the deep inner life that exists privately behind the life that is publicly presented." Inge's realism stems from his awareness that there is a great deal of fraud and hypocrisy in human behavior, particularly in human sexuality. He wanted the audience to focus on the development of character, not what was going to happen next.

Because he was writing about people he knew, Inge's plays deliver an authentic tone. The role of alcohol and sexual impropriety is a common theme in his work, serving as a contrast to the American Dream image so familiar to 1950s audiences: white picket fences surrounding perfect people leading perfect lives. The women in *Picnic* are all looking for ways to escape the boredom and loneliness of their lives. The men are confused and unsure of what they want. While embraced by mass audiences for its superficial charms, critics lauded Inge's play for its much darker themes. *Picnic* has come to be regarded as a pioneering drama for its frank depiction of sexuality and its subliminally cynical take on the "love conquers all" hypothesis.

*Picnic* premiered on Broadway February 19, 1953, at the Music Box Theatre and ran for 477 performances, closing April 10, 1954. It earned significant praise from critics in addition to winning the awards listed above. Brooks Atkinson, writing for the *New York Times*, observed that "Inge has made a rich and fundamental play" from "commonplace people." Atkinson found the female characters particularly well drawn and praised the way that Hal effortlessly brings all the women to life. Last, but not least, Paul Newman made his Broadway debut in *Picnic* as Alan.

*Edited copy from: William Inge by R. Baird Shuman, Twayne Publishers; <http://www.enotes.com/picnic>; <http://www.enotes.com/picnic/16016>; and <http://www.azreporter.com/?itemid=558>*

## Small Town America **The Chroniclers**

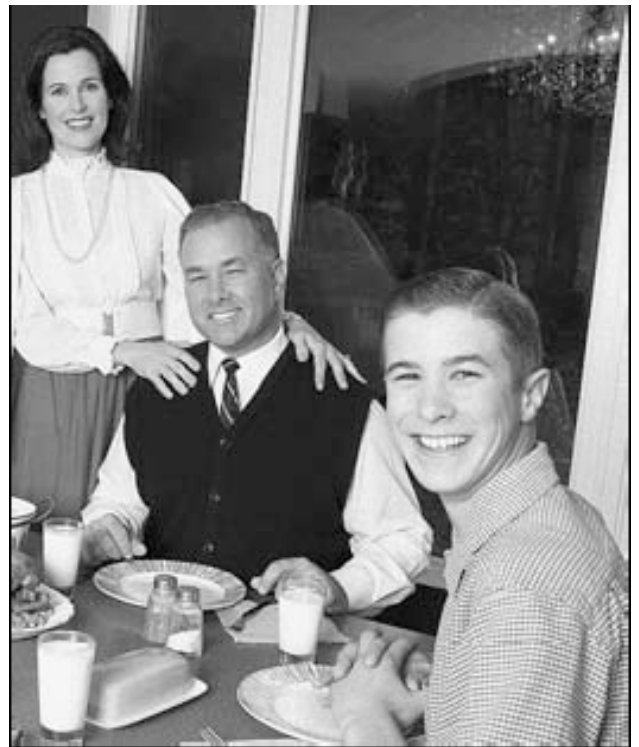


Playwrights, authors, and filmmakers have all explored the small-town scenery, some with great affection, and some with an acute awareness of the underlying pain in small towns. William Inge, aware of the pain, reflects some aspect of it in all his plays. Thornton Wilder had a great fondness for small towns and *Our Town* is a treasury of small-town types. William Faulkner's fiction chronicles southern towns, and Aaron Copeland's music gives us both the joy and the pain. In more recent years there has been a great wave of nostalgic stories from adults who grew up in small towns in the 50s, and their novels reveal both sides, too. (Kent Haruf and Larry McMurtry explore western towns; Jane Hamilton mines the farming Midwest). All have a profound

effect on our literature and our understanding of the small-town venue of the 1950s, which has almost vanished, from our world.

## Small Town America **The People**

In *Picnic* Inge explores the struggling classes in his small Kansas town. The story is intriguing and moves rapidly, but his characters offer the real riches of the play. They are a study in contrasts and the contrasts enrich the play and give us a broad canvas to consider long after the play has ended. Kindly Helen Potts is the most content with her lot of all the women in the play. Even though she yearns for a broader life, she is comfortable in her own skin. Flo Owens, the girls' mother is not. Life and her husband's desertion have soured her and the hard work of raising two girls and running a boarding house has not made it easier. The three teachers are an interesting study in contrasts: Christine, the shy new teacher; Irma, the city wanna-be sophisticate; and Rosemary, too sensitive and too aware of the amazing life that might be just beyond her grasp. Madge and Millie, the daughters, are a study in black and white. Madge is extraordinarily beautiful, restless, bored, and resentful of the beauty that makes certain behaviors expected. The younger Millie is less beautiful but her wisdom and understanding make her shine and she has a freedom of choice denied to her sister. Hal and Alan are also polar opposites; Hal is poor, aimless, and dependent on his charm and good looks for his living; Alan is smart, rich, secure, sure of what he wants, and sure of his future. Howard Bevans, the older salesman in the play, is not the catch Rosemary hopes he will be, nor is Rosemary the woman he thinks she is. Both depend on alcohol to stave off boredom and fear. All these delicately drawn characters come together on a steamy Kansas Labor Day to set life paths that change them all.



# The Playwright William Inge



William Inge was born May 3, 1913 in Independence, Kansas. Independence in the 1920's was a wealthy white-collar town. Inge's fascination for the theatre began early. In the 1920's Independence had many cultural events since top artists and shows stopped at Independence for one-night stands between performances in Kansas City and Tulsa. Although not from a well-to-do family, Inge got to see many shows as a member of a local Boy Scout Troop. The troop met in the Civic Center, and the scouts were regularly invited to sit in the balcony to watch performances after their meetings.

Inge acknowledged his debt to his hometown, saying "I've always been glad that I grew up in Independence ... it gave me a knowledge of people and a love of people. ... People who grow up in small towns get to know each other so much more closely than they do in cities. ... Independence lies in the very heart of our

country, and so maybe its people have more heart in human affairs. Big people come out of small towns."

In 1930 Inge graduated from Independence High School and moved on to attend Independence Junior College. At that time the high school and college were located across the street from each other. Later, he transferred to the University of Kansas and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Speech and Drama in 1935.

He said he wanted to plunge into Broadway then but felt that he lacked the necessary funding. The George Peabody College for Teachers offered him a scholarship to work on a master's degree. He accepted but later dropped out. "Having given up the theatre I had given up the basis that I'd set for my life. I was terribly confused. I went home to Kansas and began to flounder."

Back in Kansas, he considered a more defined purpose for his life and a better understanding of his problems. Physical exhaustion helped him think, and that summer he worked as a laborer on the state highway. He also worked as a news announcer in Wichita. In 1937-38, Inge taught high school English and Drama in Columbus, Kansas. He returned to Peabody to complete his Master of Arts Degree in 1938. From 1938 to 1943, Inge was on the faculty at Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri.

In 1943, he took a job in St. Louis, Missouri, as the drama and music critic for the *St. Louis Times*. In his work as a drama critic Inge met Tennessee Williams. He went with Williams to a performance of *The Glass Menagerie* in Chicago. He thought it the finest play he had seen in years. He returned to St. Louis determined to write a play of his own. Within three months he completed *Farther Off from Heaven*, which was produced by Margo Jones in Dallas.

Inge took a teaching position at Washington University in St. Louis and began turning a fragmentary short story into a play. The resulting play, *Come Back, Little Sheba*, earned Inge the title "most promising playwright" of the 1950 Broadway season. The play ran on Broadway for 190 performances in 1950, winning a Tony Award for Shirley Booth. The 1952 film adaptation won both an Oscar and a Golden Globe for Shirley Booth. Willy van Hemert directed a 1955 adaptation for Dutch television, and NBC aired another TV production in 1977.

Inge's Pulitzer Prize winning play, *Picnic*, was based on women he had known as a small child:

When I was a boy in Kansas, my mother had a boarding house. There were three women school teachers living in the house. I was four years old, and they were nice to me. I liked them. I saw their attempts, and, even as a child, I sensed every woman's failure. I began to sense the sorrow and the emptiness in their lives, and it touched me.

*Picnic* opened in 1953 at The Music Box Theatre in New York City. In addition to the Pulitzer, the play won The Drama Critic Circle Award, The Outer Circle Award, and The Theatre Club Award.

In the same year *Glory in the Flower* was telecast on Omnibus with Hume Cronyn, Jessica Tandy, and James Dean. And to top the year off, Paramount Pictures released the film version of *Come Back, Little Sheba* directed by Daniel Mann and starring Shirley Booth and Burt Lancaster.

In 1954 Columbia Pictures released the film version of *Picnic* directed by Joshua Logan and starring William Holden, Kim Novak, and Rosalind Russell. Inge followed these successes with two more fine plays, *Bus Stop* (1955) and *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* (1957). The latter is considered Inge's finest play as he draws most directly from his own past. Inge said the play was his "first cautious attempt to look at the past, with an effort to find order and meaning in experiences that were once too close to be seen clearly."

These two plays were also adapted into major films. *Bus Stop* was released in 1956, directed by Joshua Logan and starring Marilyn Monroe, Don Murray, and Eileen Heckart. *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* was released in 1960 starring Dorothy McGuire, Robert Preston, Shirley Knight, Eve Arden, and Angela Lansbury.

His 1959 play, *A Loss of Roses*, opened to poor reviews and closed after a three week run. Inge was devastated by the criticism. It was filmed as *The Stripper* in 1963 starring Joanne Woodward, Richard Beymer, and Claire Trevor, and with a memorable Jerry Goldsmith score.

In 1961 Inge won an Academy Award for *Splendor in the Grass*, his first original screenplay. The film starred Natalie Wood, Pat Hingle, and Warren Beatty. It also featured the only screen appearance by Inge, who played the part of Reverend Whitman. He is shown giving part of a sermon and bidding farewell to his parishioners as they leave the church.



His next two plays were *Natural Affection* in 1963 and *Where's Daddy* in 1965. *Natural Affection* had the misfortune to open on Broadway during a newspaper strike (December 1962 to April 1963). With no publicity or reviews the play lasted only 36 performances. What theatergoers missed was a powerful drama on the theme of fragmented families and random violence. The inspiration for *Natural Affection* came from a newspaper account of a seemingly meaningless murder. The lack of success for both plays prompted Inge to leave New York in 1963 at the age of fifty. He moved to California and in 1968 resumed his teaching career at the University of California at Irvine. He quit this job in 1970 because, privately, he was miserable. His long struggle with alcoholism and his profound shame over his homosexuality plagued him before, during, and after his decade of great success.

Inge wrote two novels, both set in the mythical town of Freedom, Kansas. In *Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff* high-school Latin teacher Evelyn Wyckoff is the central figure in a poignant tale of spinsterhood, racism, sexual tension, and public humiliation during the late 1950s. Polly Platt wrote the screenplay for the 1979 film adaptation starring Anne Heywood as Evelyn Wyckoff. Inge's second novel, *My Son Is a Splendid Driver*, is a fictional memoir that traces the Hansen family from 1919 into the second half of the 20th Century.

In the spring of 1973 William Inge ran out of reasons to think he was any good. He went into his garage one night, shut the door, seated himself behind the wheel of his new car, and turned the key. By morning he was dead. "Death makes us all innocent," Inge had written, "and weaves all our private hurts and griefs and wrongs into the fabric of time, and makes them a part of eternity."

Edited copy from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Inge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Inge); <http://www.ingecenter.org/aboutinge.html>; <http://www.kansaspress.ku.edu/voslif.html>; and <http://www.ingecenter.org/ingecollection.htm>

# Then and Now

## 1950

Unemployment Rate – 6%  
Average Life Expectancy – 68 years  
Average Annual Salary - \$3,000  
Gross National Product - \$400 billion  
Population – ca. 150 million people  
Male Icons – Elvis Presley, James Dean, Marlon Brando  
Female Icons – Marilyn Monroe, Doris Day, Elizabeth Taylor

## 2000

Unemployment Rate – 6%  
Average Life Expectancy – 78 years  
Average Annual Salary - \$35,000  
Gross National Product - \$10 trillion  
Population – ca. 300 million people



With rising affluence after World War II teenagers came into their own in the United States. They had money to spend and American businesses responded with products suited to their lifestyles. Television still in its infancy began to advertise directly to teens. This change also brought teenagers into their earliest rebellion mode. Rock and roll fueled this rebellion with new songs about going steady, jealousy, high school, clothing, cars, sex, and drugs.

Movies starring James Dean and Marlon Brando captured teens' anger and frustration. James Dean's tragic death in a high-speed car accident canonized him and made him an icon of teenage angst. He became a trendsetter for the "greasers" and everyone's "bad boy". In *Rebel without a Cause*, which was released just after his death, he exuded tough, manly, cool sex appeal with an emotional fragility layered over the top. Inge's Hal displays the same qualities. These qualities seem to appeal to women of all ages, not just teenagers. This character gave Inge's play its strong appeal over the passing years.

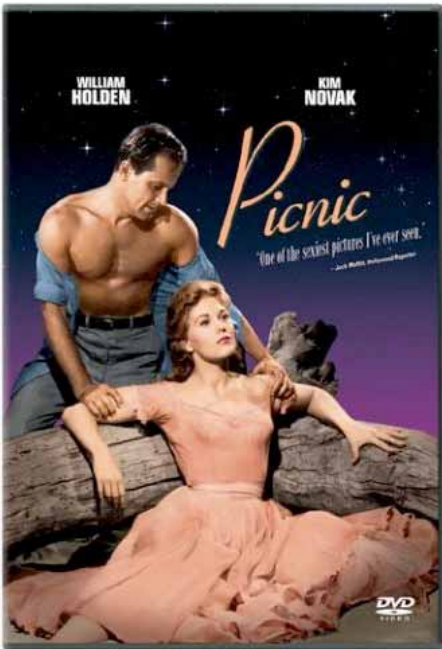
*Edited copy from: NS\_Picnic\_a.pdf, (study guide for Picnic), p. 6.*

## Picnic Slang Translations

- "As quick as you say Jack Robinson" = it will be done right away.
- "Dickens" = slang term for the devil
- "On the make" = eagerly seeking a sexual partner
- "Dime Store" = retail store selling a variety of inexpensive articles for ten cents or less
- "Corker" = something remarkable or astounding
- "I got rolled" = robbed because I was drunk, sleeping, or otherwise helpless
- "Raise Ned" = a less offensive way of saying "raise hell" or "raise the devil" (Old Ned was a 19<sup>th</sup> century euphemism for Satan)
- "Snowin'" = overwhelming with lies, especially flattery
- "Pauper's Row" = area in a cemetery reserved for the poor who can't afford casket or gravestone
- "Steak fry" = outdoor get-together or barbecue
- "Snifter" = a small portion of liquor
- "Tight" = a slang term for being drunk
- "The Stork Club" = New York's most famous nightspot
- "Hot-rod" = any car that has been modified or re-built to improve speed and acceleration.



# Picnic The Film



After directing William Inge's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Picnic* in 1953, Joshua Logan assembled a mostly new cast for the 1955 Columbia movie. Oscar winner William Holden took over the role of Hal Carter (Ralph Meeker performed the role on Broadway). Cliff Robertson was cast as his rival Alan Seymour. (Paul Newman on Broadway). Rosalind Russell campaigned for and won the part of love-starved Rosemary Sydney (Eileen Heckart on Broadway). Teenager Susan Strasberg replaced the older Kim Stanley from Broadway as Millie Owens. For Madge, first played by Janice Rule, Logan took a chance on young contract player, Kim Novak. *Picnic* made her a full-fledged star. Madge Owens was uncomfortable with the attention she received for her looks, much as Novak chafed at the image her studio had created for her. Novak always seemed to want to be in another world. This disconnected quality was unappreciated by the critics of 40 years ago (they wanted a beautiful blonde to enjoy being their idea of a girl), but it was ideal for Inge's delicate drama. William Holden had made some 40 movies by the time of this film and audiences had seen him in an elegant tux and a grimy shirt, so he, with Logan's help, made radical changes to be convincing as the

drifter, Hal. Small town America never looked better than under Logan's direction. And with William Inge on the typewriter, *Picnic* always gives a throat tug at the achingly brief loveliness of a summer day and night.

Edited copy from: [http://www.shoestring\\_organimmi\\_revs/picnic.html](http://www.shoestring_organimmi_revs/picnic.html). Copyright 1996 Monica Sullivan.

## A Comparison of Play and Film

Joshua Logan directed both the play and the film. William Inge is credited for the play, but Daniel Taradash wrote the screenplay. The film was released on February 16, 1956. It expanded the story's appeal and garnered two Academy Awards, a Golden Globe Award, and a listing as one of the ten best films of 1955. Inge's exploration of small town life, his focus on family relationships, and his depiction of the loneliness that permeates so many peoples' lives struck a chord with 1950s audiences and continues to do so in the decades following its debut.

### Cast

Helen Potts  
Hal Carter  
Millie Owens  
Bomber (Paper Boy)  
Madge Owens  
Flo Owens  
Rosemary Sydney  
Alan (Seymour) Benson  
Irma Kronkite  
Christine Schoenwalder  
Howard Bevans

### Film

Verna Felton  
William Holden  
Susan Strasberg  
Nick Adams  
Kim Novak  
Betty Field  
Rosalind Russell  
Cliff Robertson  
Reta Shaw  
Elizabeth Wilson  
Arthur O'Connell

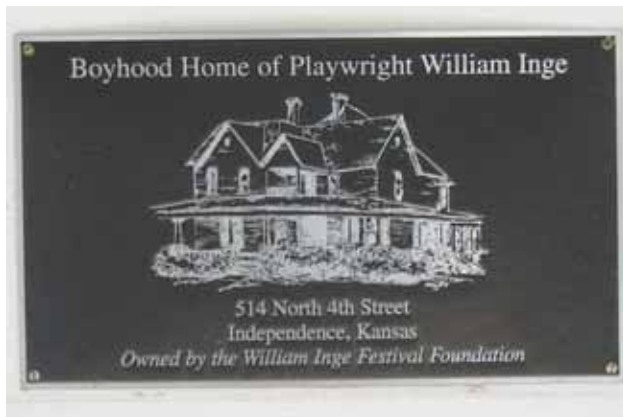
### Play

Ruth McDevitt  
Ralph Meeker  
Kim Stanley  
Morris Miller  
Janice Rule  
Peggy Conklin  
Eileen Heckart  
Paul Newman  
Reta Shaw  
Elizabeth Wilson  
Arthur O'Connell

The film added another 18 characters not included in the play.

Edited copy from: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0048491/fullcredits#cas> and <http://www.enotes.com/picnic/16016>

# The William Inge Center for the Arts



Prior to Inge's death in 1973, Independence Community College (ICC) began an "Inge Collection" of clippings and memorabilia. Inge, an Independence native, ICC alumnus, and Pulitzer and Academy Award-winning playwright, donated five original manuscripts.

After the playwright's death, his sister Helene Inge Connell carried out Inge's wish to leave books and other items to the college library. ICC received more than 2,000 volumes of books in 1976 and in 1980. Mrs. Connell also donated Inge's collection of approximately 600 classical and jazz records. She designated ICC as the archival depository of Inge's works. On October 25, 1981, the William Inge Collection officially opened to the public.

During the preceding week, there was a festival of film versions of Inge's plays. For the Collection's formal opening, the audience watched a multi-media production, "William Inge: Penn Avenue to

Broadway," compiled, edited, and produced by ICC alumnus, Michael Wood.

The genesis of the William Inge Theatre Festival sprang from the festivities surrounding the opening of the Collection. The following year, ICC hosted the first "William Inge Festival" on May 3, 1982, which would have been the playwright's sixty-ninth birthday. The Festival program began with a showing of "Penn Avenue to Broadway", followed by a panel discussion.

Longtime ICC drama instructor Margaret Goheen spearheaded a committee to consider other ideas. They contacted playwright Jerome Lawrence, Inge's long-time friend, for advice. Lawrence suggested a theatre festival that focused on a single playwright. Lawrence was the first playwright Honoree for the 1983 Festival.

Mrs. Goheen set the stage for the Inge Festival's continuous growth and prestige. Following her death in 1990, director Jill Warford continued her vision. Current Artistic Director Peter Ellenstein has overseen further expansion since 2001. Now, the nationally renowned four-day Inge Festival is the showpiece event of numerous arts activities sponsored by the Center.

The William Inge Theatre Festival has honored some of the world's most prestigious playwrights who have traveled to Independence to accept the Festival's Distinguished Achievement in American Theatre Award. Additional awards bestowed include the Otis Guernsey New Voices award honoring a peer-nominated emerging playwright, the Kansas Citizen for the Arts Award recognizing the artistic achievements of a Kansas native, and the Margaret Goheen Award.

The Inge Center began year-round activity in 2002. Chief among the newest initiatives is the Playwrights-in-Residence program. Accomplished working professionals live in William Inge's boyhood home and are provided time to work on new projects. These receive a developmental reading and further support. The Inge Center also conducts the Playwrights-in-the-Schools program, which installs creative playwriting in rural public schools. The Center, in partnership with ICC, operates the Professional Playwriting Certificate program. It also hosts periodic Guest Artist presentations, providing instruction to the general public, arts training programs for artists and classroom instructors, scholarships, and additional services for theatre artists-in-training.

With the cooperation of Tina Fallon and the 24-Hour Company in New York, the Inge Center produces three versions of the 24-Hour plays annually: one for regional high school students, one for regional college students, and one for the Independence community.

The Inge Center provides scholarships for aspiring young playwrights and theatre students, often through partnerships with other organizations, such as the Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF), Educational Theatre Association (Thespians), and many others. The Inge Center often acts as a link between educational institutions and the professional theatre world.

For the past twenty years, under the direction of Mike Wood, the Inge Center has amassed a considerable video archive of interviews with playwrights, actors, directors, producers, and other theatre professionals. Using this extensive archive the Inge Center has created a video on the craft of playwriting, "*The Drama of Creation: Writers on Writing*," featuring many of America's greatest playwrights. This video is available for purchase on our website.

This year the Inge Center has launched a free Streaming Video Website making portions of the interviews with all of our honorees available on-line for researchers, students, teachers and the general public. There is nothing else like it available anywhere in the world.

With continued and growing support from local, regional, and national patrons and funders, not to mention the remarkable support from the William Inge Festival Foundation and Independence Community College, the William Inge Center for the Arts looks forward to another quarter century of quality arts programming.

<http://www.ingecenter.org/ingecenterhistory.htm>

# Creating a Theatrical Production

By Denise Burson Freestone, Artistic Director and Co-Founder

From start to finish, it takes an incredible number of artists to create a theatrical production, and the greatest productions are frequently realized by individuals who respect each others' talents and abilities and develop a strong sense of teamwork — camaraderie, dedication, and joy in the work being accomplished are often the first signs that an excellent work of art will soon be created. First, and obviously foremost, is the **Playwright**. In modern theatre, the vast majority of plays are in written script form. However, other types of plays are still developed today, such as scripts that are loosely based on a "scenario" or plot line and then improvised by the actors and director with no specific spoken lines ever being formally written.

For OpenStage Theatre, the plays to be performed in a given season are selected by the **Artistic Director**, with a great deal of input and recommendations made by the Company's regular directors and key Company Members. Once the season is chosen, the Artistic Director then selects the individual **Directors** for each play. Each spring, OpenStage holds auditions for all of the shows to be produced the following season, which runs from August through the following June. The Directors cast their plays from actors and actresses who are new to the Company as well as those who have worked with the Company previously (some for as long as thirty-four years).

Each production rehearses for six to seven weeks, four to five times a week, usually for three hours per rehearsal. During the rehearsal process, the **Assistant Director** helps the Director in numerous capacities, including recording stage blocking, making notes for the Director, communicating necessary information to the performers and designers, etc. Prior to the beginning of rehearsals, the Director meets with the **Design Team**, which is composed of the **Set Designer, Costume Designer, Lighting Designer, Properties Designer/Set Dresser, Sound Designer, Hair Designer, and Make-Up Designer**. The Design Team determines all of the physical design elements for a production, from how an individual character's hair is styled to what quality, intensity and hue the lights will have during individual scenes. All of these elements—set, costumes, hand properties, furniture, set dressing, lights, sound, make-up, hair, and special effects (if needed)—must be coordinated so that they work together to actualize the Director's vision in the best possible way. The Design Team continues to meet throughout the rehearsal period, and their expertise in visualizing the final physical product of the play is a vital element for the play's success. The **Producer or Production Manager** oversees all of these efforts, as well as the realization of the designs—such as set construction, costume construction, etc. This realization may be accomplished by the Designers or by **Theatre Technicians**, such as **Master Carpenters, Seamstresses, Master Electricians, Sound Engineers, Hair or Make-Up Stylists**, etc. Other Theatre Technicians vital to mounting a finished production include the **Stagehands**, who run the show backstage, the **Lighting and Sound Board Operators**, and, most importantly, the **Stage Manager**, who is in charge of all aspects of the play once the design aspects and the acting are merged together. This "merging" occurs when the play "sets in," or moves out of the rehearsal and construction space and into the performance space for technical rehearsals and dress rehearsals, which usually last one week. The Stage Manager makes sure the stage is set appropriately, that all equipment is operating correctly, that all performers are present for their entrances, and "calls" all the cues during performances by telling the Board Operators and Stagehands when to execute a change in lighting, sound or stage setting.

All of these individuals are vital to the final product and, in essence, are present on the stage during the performance through their artistic contributions. They create the world the **Actors** and **Actresses** reside in during the actual performance. But all of these efforts would be meaningless without the **Audience**. The following quote, from the play *The Dresser* by Ronald Harwood, captures the true purpose of theatre:

***"I had a friend once said, 'Norman, I don't care if there are only three people out front, or if the audience laugh when they shouldn't, or don't when they should, one person, just one person is certain to know and understand. And I act for him.' That's what my friend said."***



## A Brief Overview of **OpenStage Theatre & Company**

Founded in 1973, OpenStage Theatre & Company has committed itself to a professional orientation for the serious theatre artist. The organization's goal has always been to establish a nationally recognized theatre in Northern Colorado. Excellence, discipline and artistic integrity are the principles that continue to guide the Company, as evidenced by the Company receiving the 1997 Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts. OpenStage Theatre has been actively producing and promoting live performing arts in Northern Colorado since its inception, making it one of the longest practicing theatrical producers in Colorado. The Company has grown steadily and consistently and is a strong member of the statewide arts producing community. The Theatre produces shows for a wide range of audiences, including adult and family fare in both the contemporary and classical genres, and supplements its six regular season shows with challenging and original works through *openstage etc* and original radio drama through Rabbit Hole Radio Theatre. The Company has produced comedies, dramas, histories, grand operas, musicals and original works and has toured regionally. OpenStage Theatre continues an ambitious policy of community outreach and development, providing materials, personnel and professional advice to schools, government and social service agencies, businesses, and other art producers. The Company is an active partner in the planning efforts of Arts Alive Fort Collins, the Chamber of Commerce, the City of Fort Collins, the Downtown Development Authority, the Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Colorado Council on the Arts and the Colorado Theatre Guild. OpenStage Theatre & Company is committed to the development of Fort Collins as an important and viable cultural center for Colorado. Its reputation for quality and consistency has been built through years of hard work and with the talents of many fine performers and theatre artists. The Company has been paying honorariums to actors and technicians since 1977. In numerous instances, the training and experience acquired through OpenStage have provided individual artists with the expertise to launch successful professional careers. During its history the Theatre has produced over 400 theatrical productions, and the caliber of its shows has been compared with professional companies in Chicago, Houston, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Denver and...yes...even New York.

"OpenStage Theatre Company – the trailbreaker, the stalwart, the adventurer, almost all things to all theater people in Northern Colorado for [over] thirty years..." *Loveland Reporter Herald*

"OpenStage ...can easily take its place among Colorado's best companies..." *The Denver Post*

"OpenStage productions rival anything to be seen in Denver..." *Greeley Tribune*

"Northern Colorado does not have a Radio City Music Hall, a Metropolitan Museum of Art or a Rockefeller Center. But it does have OpenStage Theatre & Company, a premiere performing arts organization whose caliber of professionalism makes Fort Collins theatre-goers feel like they are in New York City...Whether you're looking for an evening of theatrical professionalism or non-traditional innovation, OpenStage Theatre & Company is a sure bet for quality entertainment." *Scene Magazine*



*Theatre & Company*

*OpenStage Theatre is delighted  
to have you experience the  
Student Night Performance  
at the Lincoln Center!*

THERE ARE, HOWEVER, SOME THINGS  
YOU WILL AND WON'T WANT TO DO  
AT THE PERFORMANCE!  
THESE DOs AND DON'Ts ARE COMMONLY CALLED...

## Theatre Etiquette

- **DO dress up a bit.** You don't have to be fancy, but don't wear shorts. Absolutely no hats are allowed.
- **DO enjoy the performance.** Listen, laugh when appropriate, applaud!
- **DON'T embarrass yourself** by yelling out, whistling, clapping at inappropriate times, or acting as if you were at a sports game instead of a theatre. Don't, above all, fall asleep!
- **DON'T bring food!** This is not like a movie theatre, so food is totally inappropriate. No eating at any time.
- **DON'T talk to your friends during the performance.** If you don't understand something or wish to make a short comment once or twice, that's fine, but constant conversation is the ultimate in rudeness.
- **DON'T leave the performance unless you feel ill.** Stay in your seat during the play and during the blackouts between scenes.
- **DO focus on details, listen and watch carefully,** and take some memories of the performance with you!
- **If necessary,** you will be asked to leave the theatre, which could be embarrassing.