

# The Mountaineers

gen. info

Seattle, Washington 98111

P. O. BOX 122



BRANCHES AT TACOMA, EVERETT AND OLYMPIA

1020 Seneca Street  
Seattle, Washington, 98101  
23 January, 1970

Mr. Mark R. Sumner, Director  
Institute of Outdoor Drama  
Chapel Hill, No. Carolina, 27514

Dear Mr. Sumner,

Again I must apologize for my long delay in sending you the requested information about the Mountaineer Players and their Forest Theatre. Actually I've been hounding our photographer to make a few simple prints from his store of negatives that would show the Theatre in its beautiful setting, but so far to no avail. So I'll just go ahead now and gather my material together anyway, for whatever help it may be among your material. (A suggestion has just been received as to another source of a few pictures that I shall look into.)

Shortly after I wrote you on 19 June (1969) I did find my carbon of the letter I had written you on 16 March 1964, and will try not to repeat what was given there.

Organization. To begin with, if you will look through the little pamphlet About the Mountaineers you will get the basic framework, and Page Eleven of the September 1968 monthly bulletin will give the details of organization. (Two other little pamphlets are included that have pretty pictures.)

History of the Players. If you will kindly read the article in the 1942 Annual, "Twenty Years of Sylvan Scenes," you will have a little more detail as regards the origin and early development of the Play idea from 1923 on. It should be emphasized that Bremerton (with its U.S. Naval Shipyard) is fifteen miles from Seattle across Puget Sound and up a narrow passage, and until the new ferries in 1968 the trip required an hour each way, now only 45 minutes.

Travel Arrangements. The trip by ferry costs \$2.35 for car and driver and \$1.05 for each passenger one way -- no reduction for round trip. As you may note from the brochures, we do get a reduction on the ferry rate for play-going passengers who procure their tickets from Player salesmen. This will include bus for the seven miles out from Bremerton for those who do not come by car.

Organization. In common with each other Committee of the Club, The Players Committee is authorized by the Board of Trustees

and its officers and members appointed by them. There is a Chairman and a Co-Chairman, A Treasurer, a Secretary, and several members who carry out various duties such as publicity, set-building, theatre care, etc., etc. The group is probably more cohesive than most other committees, and a definite attempt is made to develop an esprit de corps -- with player-organized social and outdoor events. For it is realized that if a play is to be made ready there must be loyalty to the group and there cannot be any lagging or copping out. Please note that the work -- sets, costumes, business arrangements, publicity, and, oh, yes, acting, -- is entirely volunteer. Only the Director, Music Director, and Pianist are paid fees, and only the two Directors have transportation reimbursed. All the others in the group pay their transportation cost and the cost of meals prepared by the Kitsap Cabin Committee.

Furthermore the Players are the only activity group of the Club who carry on an election for their Committee. This is done at the time of the last performances in June, and the names selected are presented to the Board for confirmation.

Script Selection. Soon after committee election, a reading group is busy surveying the field for the selection of the next play, which must be made by late fall if preparation is to begin in late winter. Of course the suggestions and advice of the Director are helpful. A certain amount of adaptation of the script is frequently required, with the help of the Director, in order to adjust and "indoor" play for presentation on a large stage with no curtain. An innovation of our Director in 1969 was to have the actors on stage at the end of a scene carry off their set pieces as they left and the actors of the following scene carry their set on -- thus avoiding the appearance of any stage-hands not in costume.

Personnel. A word as to the type of persons in the group. All ages are represented from very young children to persons in the 60's and 70's; and all professions. We've had teachers, lawyers, a doctor or two, insurance men, salsemen, clerical workers, housewives, technicians, aeromechanics, laborers, almost any type of worker there is. As far as I can recall, only three of us have had courses in drama schools (one of our best, trained at Northwestern, is now an accomplished radio and TV announcer here -- but lost to us). Many, however, have taken classes in the studio run by our Director in addition to his high school drama coaching.

Financial Information. In the beginning, as you will see in "Sylvan Scenes" the Players financed themselves and because they were using the Cabin property had to turn over the usual cabin fee of 25¢ for each person who came to the Theatre. When, in 1933, they became an authorized committee of the Club, they were permitted the more generous arrangement mentioned. For many years now, however, probably since resumption of the activity in 1947, they have been allowed to pay a lump sum to the Cabin, beginning at \$400

and nowadays \$600. This is considered to be in lieu of the "lodge fee" that is charged for persons coming for mere enjoyment of the property because the Players' rehearsal and performance weekends are looked upon as "work parties" -- as indeed they are. The \$600 is considered part of the Play expense, along with all other. Early in the season the Players Treasurer will request of the Club Treasurer an advance of several hundred dollars to buy scripts, costumes and materials, set items (lumber, muslin, paint), advance royalties, etc. This comes out of the Mountaineers' General Fund, and at the final close of the season, what is left after all expenses are paid is returned to the General Fund. I am inclosing a few annual financial statements. The very unusual earnings of 1969 may have been due to six days of good weather and a 50% raise in the admission fee. This is not likely to happen often.

Publicity. Brochures are printed in thousands and distributed. We also have window posters each year to be put up in store windows all around Seattle and suburbs (sizes 10"x14", 12"x18", 14"x22"). We now are able to arrange favorable publicity in both the two rival daily papers -- whereas in the past we could hope for assistance from only one or the other at a time. Material is sent to all the local newspapers in the western side of Washington. Radio has used our notices, and on occasion an episode is shown on TV. Sunset Magazine once or twice tried to publicize our June play but required pictures long before we had any costumes ready.

Theatre Construction. A rough sketch of the actual stage is inclosed. The trail winding down the forested stream bank to it, and with the depth of the amphitheatre included, drops about 180 feet vertically -- and the stream behind the stage about 25 feet still lower. Wings consist of upright slabs of bark nailed to frames. (Originally the bark was of western red cedar found in the surrounding forest, but this is no longer to be found, and shorter slabs of Douglas fir are not so attractive.) The wings are built up high enough, of course, to shut off the backstage areas. Only in the past year was a road constructed down into the valley to a neighboring ranch on which heavy materials, including the three speakers of the sound system, could be brought down. Through the previous 42 years, lumber and everything came down by shoulder or wheelbarrow -- as well as did everything that had to go back up again.

Sound Effects. Incidental taped music is played from the sound shack as the audience is entering and at intermission, amplified in three speakers, as are any sound effects needed for the play. Our member who handles this also tapes our performance for our entertainment later on in the autumn together with colored slides available.

Amphitheatre. From 600 to 800 people fill the terraced amphitheatre nicely. (There was a blueprint once, when it was rebuilt in 1947, which stipulated 1000.) When the huge audiences crowd in to the last performances, many are way back, up in the woods -- where we do have a few terraces -- and even back along

the trail where they can hear but not see. As they may have already assumed the ferry expense they decide to get what they can of the show. Of course a good many of our audience come from the towns and cities on that west side of the Sound. As working people, we cannot prolong the program into the summer for many have their vacations then.

Performances are ordinarily given five times during the last weekend in May and two in June. There must be a dress rehearsal on the first Saturday so the first performance will be on Sunday, with performances on both Saturdays and Sundays in the following weeks. However, when Memorial Day holiday comes near a weekend an extra performance can be given, as in 1969 when dress rehearsal could be held on Friday, May 30, and a performance given on Saturday. The show goes on at 2:00 p.m. Once (1966) an extra show was given at 6:00 p.m. following the afternoon show, but the attendance hardly warranted the extra effort and the late dinner. We have occasionally played to small audiences in pouring rain. Luckily this has happened on a Sunday so we could take our costumes home to clean and dry them before the next weekend. If there were a bad rain on a Saturday, there would be no means of getting the costumes ready for the next day.

#### ATTENDANCE

<u>Year</u>	<u>At Each Performance</u>						<u>Totals</u>
1962	375	175	800	700	1132	1800	4982
1963	245	491	927	928	1619		4210
1964	910	507	517	919	1522		4375
1965	667	722	1324	580	1199		4492
1966	1056	330	544	180	1572	984 1832	6588
1967	500	610	1151	695	1061		4017
1968	188	220	691	1209	858	1003	4172
1969	406	510	930	1052	876	1236	5010

"Associated Projects" are few. On play days the Cabin Committee provides hot dogs and coffee and cokes for our picnicking audience.

Parking is provided, supervised by volunteer members, on our own grounds and on county property nearby at no charge.

I hope that the foregoing, together with other material being sent, will supply the information requested concerning the Mountaineer Players and their Forest Theatre, and hope eventually to have some pictures to send you. Thankyyou for your interest.

Sincerely,

*Harriet K. Walker*

(Miss) Harriet K. Walker