

PACfacts

A NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF THE
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

spring 2008

www.pacfriends.org

PROSCENIUM PROFILE:

Peter Wilt: among other talents, a gift for improv



Peter Wilt is a pioneer. No, he doesn't wear a coonskin cap or orbit Mars in a space capsule. But, over 25 years Peter's pathfinding instinct, plus his initiative, hard work (and patience) has helped get our PAC underway and its programming excellence sustained.

As Program Manager for Cal Poly Arts, he draws on deep theatrical know-how, plus a mix of managerial skill, artistic imagination, and sheer dogged persistence. Peter would be quick to emphasize that he only plays a supporting role. But, over the years he has contributed significantly to the success of our enterprise.

"We were definitely pioneers," said Peter in an interview.

For a moment, picture Harman Hall and the Alex and Faye Spanos Theatre as beautiful, shiny, empty containers. Filling these containers 300 times each year -- with traveling shows, classical and jazz concerts, recitals, graduations, performances for school children, et cetera -- calls for teamwork. Also imagination, persistence, patience, and a flair for improv.

Peter seems ideally cut out for the role. He earned a Master's degree in theatre management from Brigham Young University, then managed the Laura V. Shaw Theatre at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. "They had a nationally recognized theatre program," he recalls.

He came to Cal Poly in 1983. Already in place was the Quintessence Series of classical concerts, created by professor Clif Swanson, who later founded the Mozart Festival. Soon, aided in part by an infusion of California state lottery money and the CSU Summer Arts Pro-

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Front and Center



—by Nancy Cochran

As we welcome spring and new beginnings, I would also like to give a heartfelt welcome and thanks to seven ushers who recently joined the ranks of Floor Captain - Patti Anderson, Bob Conlen, Dick Flanders, Hank Herzog, Linda Overton, Helen Segletes and Judy Springer. Our floor captains serve as extra eyes and ears for the house managers, ready on radio to assist the front-of-house operations. The PAC now

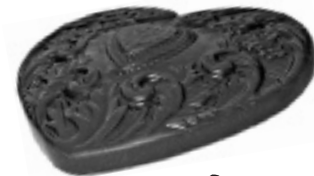
has 49 floor captains that deserve our support and respect. We couldn't do it without them!

The house managers and I would also like to say bravo to all the PAC Friends who "stepped up" and offered to usher a few extra shows this past month. We had an unusually heavy schedule with special events added late to our calendar. I'm

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Baa-a-a!
how Carol Rockwell's
goat was gotten ...
see page 3



Yum-m-m!
how Agatha Reardon's
love affair with chocolate
began ...
see page 4

Opinions & Observations . . .

QUESTION: What was your first choice in upcoming events?



Marlene Gibbons (11.5 years): "Cal Poly Jazz, which is my favorite music and I support Cal Poly students."



Virginia Baker (1.5 years): "Capitol Steps' is my first choice this time. I'm curious about their take in this election year."



Bob Conlen (6.5 years): "Love Janis' is my first pick, the story of Janis Joplin – something to balance out all those Symphony, Master Chorale, and Mozart Festival shows!



Terry Roberts (9.5 years): "Capitol Steps because this is an election year and there's so much material to work with."



Terry Hopkins (3 years): "Love, Janis' because Janis Joplin sang in one of my growing-up music eras, and because I enjoy biographies be they printed, performed or sung."

Nancy Cochran, continued

not an advocate of e-mail blasts unless it's a desperate situation, and we were at that point where I was sending out weekly SOS cries.

The Steering Committee is looking at options to reduce the SOS List, perhaps endorsing a true quarterly sign-up period rather than three times per year and possibly adding new ushers to our corps. Our goal is to have enough volunteers to cover all our events, not just the Category A shows.

With this in mind, I encourage you to be brave and adventurous. Sign-up for a few events that you know nothing about except that it works for your schedule. Many of our Friends have told me that some of their most rewarding usher experiences have been those shows they thought they would never have enjoyed. Go ahead - try it, you'll like it!



Peter Wilt, continued

gram, a Center for the Arts was established in the College of Liberal Arts. This morphed into Cal Poly Arts in 1987.

"We soon added more shows, Peter recalls. One during Summer Arts starred singer Bobby McFerron, of 'Don't worry, be happy' fame. The seed was planted for performances not solely for and by Cal Poly theatre and music majors, but also for the wider SLO community.

The community responded with gusto, not just by attending events but also by supporting an Arts Salute fundraising dinner & auction, started by new Cal

Poly Arts Director, Ron Regier. "This brought out a whole new donor group including local businesses and individuals," Peter said. "This exceeded our expectations, and we were tickled pink."

Working closely with Ron, currently PAC's Managing Director, Peter took on the challenge of ticketing and marketing 25 performances within one month for the Summer Arts program. "There was

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Yehudit ("youDEET") Korn has been a PAC usher 11 years. A native of Brooklyn, N.Y., her "Healing Springs Medical Bodywork" practice, recently profiled in the NewTimes (picture), involves gentle massage, which stimulates lymphatic flow. "I really enjoy working with healthy people -- as well as people with serious illnesses," she says. Her work phone: 781-0111

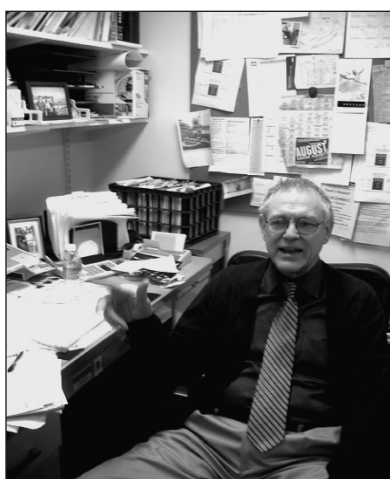


Photo by Steve E. Miller, New Times

Peter Wilt, continued

a lot of nice stuff,” he recalls. “Really great.” Concurrently he oversaw the conversion to computer ticketing, and built a mailing list for show promotions. “It was bootstrapping – increasing programming and increasing our subscriber base.”

Around town and campus there had long been talk of having a Performing Arts Center. “But at first the community was leery of partnering with the University,” Peter recalls. “Then in the early ‘90s the mayor of SLO, Melanie Billig, conducted a feasibility study, and the upshot was that Cal Poly and the city needed to partner to make it happen.



Multi-tasking: Peter Wilt at work in his Spanos Theatre office

Soon the Foundation (FPAC) was founded and fundraising got serious. The rest, as they say, is history.

Peter’s gift for improvising showed the day a Vietnamese water puppet show arrived to set up in Harman Hall. Earlier, the show’s director had assured Peter that the show would work in a proscenium theater. “They were ready to load the five foot high tank of water,” Peter recalled with a smile. “The stage manager called me over. ‘We have a problem -- people seated in the Orchestra can’t see anything!’ So I called the Director of Athletics and asked if we could transfer the show to Mustang Stadium. The answer was yes, and it was the perfect venue. It was absolutely magical.”

–By Bob Young

My little bit of heaven...



“I heard him walking across the deck in the middle of the night,” Carol Rockwell said, but when I turned on the outside lights I didn’t see anything unusual. The next day I met him face to face. He’s a great big black male goat with blue eyes and horns. He was hungry so I fed him some rabbit pellets from the supply I keep for my rabbit, Licorice. He followed me around the yard all day and crawled under the deck after dark to sleep. That was five years ago and he’s been here ever since. I named him Lonesome George after I learned what happened to him.

George and another three-year old goat were staked out to eat poison oak on my neighbor’s property. They grazed all morning. Mid-afternoon a pit bull owned by a neighbor down the road got loose, attacked the other goat, and tore it apart. George bolted, pulled out his stake, and ran. When he got to my house he stopped running. My neighbor told me to keep him because he thought the pit bull might try again. Rockwell said if she ever saw that pit bull on her property she’d shoot him.

Rockwell lives in a mobile home park on a high hill with a valley view near Arroyo Grande. She calls it her little bit of heaven. She’s been there with her family of pets for 25 years.



Courtesy of Carol Rockwell

In addition to George and Licorice, she has three gray and white cats named Comfy, Cozy and Carefree who stay inside. Fairy Fey, a feral cat, comes daily for her ration of food and hangs out.

Taking care of her pets and her home occupies much of Rockwell’s time, but in the evenings she and her pets gather in the living room to watch TV. The cats have the run of the house, but the rabbit stays in his pen and George stays on his rug. He goes outside to sleep under the deck when Rockwell retires.

He tended to roam too far from home before he was neutered, but Rockwell promised him she would never tie him up and there wasn’t another option. She couldn’t entice George to jump up into the back of her pickup truck, so she found a veterinarian through the 4H club in Arroyo Grande who would come to her hill.

Rockwell calls George the “almost” perfect pet. He doesn’t bark, bite, eat meat, have fleas, ticks, or dig holes. He is house broken and is no longer lonesome.

Rockwell’s only disappointment in George is that she can’t get him to mow the grass. Why eat grass when he has his fill of animal feed with molasses, hay, alfalfa, rabbit pellets, birdseed, and in the summer, plums off the tree, and roses off the bush? George is one smart goat.

--Story and photos by BeJae Blake





Truce called in concession wars

A friendly rivalry developed between Spanos Theatre house managers Pam Clark and Sam Marinas during two Sunday performances of 'Peter Pan.' Pam's post-event report showed cookie, soft drink and coffee sales of \$211. "Wow!" she wrote. A week later Sam posted a \$243 total. "Ha!" he crowed. Later deciding to bury the hatchet, Pam and Sam shook hands on the success of the combined concession sales for their events. Here are the stats:

Event	Peter Pan	Peter Pan
Date/Time	Sun. 7/22/07 - 2 p.m.	Sun. 7/29/07 - 2 p.m.
Attendance	245	334
Concessions	\$211 Wow!	\$243
Curtain Down	4:15 p.m.	4:15 p.m.
	Pam Clark	Sam Marinas

Investigative reporting and photo by Bejae Blake
 If you, too, have a PAC story to tell you can reach me at:
 bejaeblake@hotmail.com

Agatha's ♥ affair with chocolate

"Save Saturday, June 29th, for a special event," her daughter, Kim Murray asked shortly after Agatha Reardon retired and moved to SLO in 1996. "It's a surprise."

Agatha recalls: "She drove me to the new Performing Arts Center where we had a great time at the Hard Hat Ball. I was so impressed with the facility and the staff that I called Nancy Cochran the next day and asked to volunteer."

Reardon became one of the docents who gave tours of the new facility

before performances started and later became an usher and floor captain. Many of the house managers and floor captains learned of her love affair with chocolate when she donated dessert favors for PAC Friends' special events.

"As a child my mother taught me to bake cakes and taught my older sister to bake pies," she said. "We were a family of eight and we all loved dessert." In her high school annual she listed chocolate cake as her favorite food. Her

interest in making favors started in 1985 when she saw a chocolate candy rose and thought it would be fun to do that for her family and friends.

Today Reardon has over 400 clear plastic candy molds stored in bins by categories; they include holidays, birthdays, graduations, weddings, special occasions, sports, seashells, fruit, vegetables, flowers and more. Now she makes favors, gift baskets, and centerpieces for family, friends and...for fund raisers.

Planning begins well in advance of an event so there is time to get supplies from contacts in Southern California and Reardon often has several projects going at the same time. The smallest project is a gift basket while the largest, so far, is 15 centerpieces plus 175 small potted flower favors for a large luncheon benefit.

"Not only does planning take time," said Reardon, "but large projects have to be made in segments with time to clean-up afterwards." Reardon donates her time and her favors to charitable events. "It's one of the ways I contribute to the community."



AGATHA'S CANDY MAKING TIPS

1. Melt small quantities of good quality chocolate in the microwave and spoon into plastic molds.
2. Put molds into the freezer for five to 10 minutes depending on the size and thickness of the mold.
3. Carefully pop chocolate from mold onto counter top covered with wax paper.
4. Let chocolate come to room temperature before packaging.



—Story and photos by Bejae Blake