

Saint Michael's Playhouse
HISTORIC TIMELINE

- 1947 Henry G. Fairbanks opens Saint Michael's Playhouse in a building on the Saint Michael's College Campus, formerly an army surplus building from Fort Ethan Allen
- Opening night production receives one dozen curtain calls
- Fairbanks extends the college drama school, The Ethan Allen Players, to offer an apprenticeship program in the summer and brings in big name actors from The Boston Repertory Company
- 1948 Sponsors are first featured in program offering after-show dinner and drink specials
- 1949 First year the apprenticeship program puts on a children's theater performance
- Playhouse becomes a regular feature in Burlington magazine, *Panorama*
- Theater moves from six- to eight- week season
- The Playhouse is hailed as the first professional theater and drama school in the country
- 1950 Fairbanks offers Catholic University professional actors summer residence at the Playhouse
- Screen star Bela Lugosi performs lead role in *Dracula*
- Television star Robin Ladd joins the Playhouse
- Future stage star Ethel Barrymore Colt comes to Playhouse for her debut singing role
- 1951 Reverend Gilbert Hartke of Catholic University comes to Vermont and combines actors from Catholic University and the Playhouse to perform the classics using professional actors, directors, and stage managers
- 1952 The Saint Michael's Playhouse performers officially become Players, Incorporated
- A string of positive reviews of Players, Inc., comes from *The Boston Globe* and other prominent newspapers

- 1953 Opening night draws largest crowd to date
- 1954 "Actors' Equity Association" term implemented into language
- 1955 Don Rathgeb has first stint as technical director
- Surveys are included in programs to help plan for following season
- 1956 Shows include such hits as *The Rainmaker* and *Father of the Bride*
- 1957 Program starts to grow in length with more local ads
- 1958 The Playhouse adds an extra show as an anti-recession statement
- 1959 Founding crew begins to retire; Don Rathgeb comes on board officially as technical director
- Actress and director Joanne Ellspermann comes to Playhouse for first time
- 1960 Donald Rathgeb and Joanne Ellspermann wed
- Start of the "Glory Years" with Donald and Joanne Rathgeb and Margaret O'Brien as resident directors
- Opening Night Receptions are implemented after the show in lobby
- Carol Keefe, later the first Playhouse actress to achieve international fame, makes debut
- Academy Award winner Jon Voight makes his professional theater debut at the Playhouse
- 1961 Playhouse relocates to air-conditioned building on campus of Saint Michael's College
- Jon Voight returns for another season
- 1962 Jackie Gleason's daughter plays role in *Arsenic and Old Lace*
- 1963 Subscription sales are installed

- 1964 Subscriptions purchased from as far away as Chicago and North Carolina
- Inclusion in *The New York Times* Theater Directory
- 1965 Players, Inc. is selected to tour internationally as part of a United States cultural presentation program abroad
- 1966 Ticket prices start to rise; new musicals and comedies start to become a mainstay
- 1967 Different program designs are used, ads continue to increase
- 1968 Press coverage starts to move from mere reviews to differentiating between professional and amateur summer theater
- 1969 Show choices begin to transition into more diverse theater genres
- 1970 Playhouse burns to ground
- Bob Hope and Jerry Lewis perform in Playhouse benefit in New York City
- 1971 Rathgeb O'Brien Rathgeb, Inc. is formed by Donald Rathgeb, Margaret O'Brien and Joanne Rathgeb. R.O.R. becomes new Playhouse producing organization. Without a home at Saint Michael's College the Playhouse now operates as Playhouse Cabaret Theater at Marble Island
- 1972 New Playhouse producing organization ROR presents *The Owl and the Pussycat* at Marble Island.
- 1973 Cabaret Theater at Marble Island continues
- 1974 Final summer at Marble Island
- 1975 The McCarthy Arts Center opens at Saint Michael's College with the Playhouse production of *The Glass Menagerie* starring Broadway actor Kenneth Kimmins and Joanne Rathgeb
- 1976 Playhouse, produced by Rathgeb O'Brien Rathgeb, Inc., operates first full season in its new home, The McCarthy Arts Center

- 1977 Good reviews, subscription sales are back, seating chart arrangements begin, Opening Night Receptions are back
- 1978 Actor Ray DeMattis, performs in *Play It Again Sam*, a Baird Children's Center Benefit, after appearing on Broadway in *Grease*.
- 1979 New York theater critic Pat Garrity writes review and mentions his involvement as a 1969 summer apprentice
- 1980 The Children's Theater starts to gain heightened recognition

Regional news articles establish the Playhouse as a premier professional theater in Northeast
- 1981 Playhouse produces new musical *Scrambled Feet*, and a Vermont duck makes its theater debut
- 1982 Season moves to present arrangement – four shows for two weeks each over an eight week period

Professional recruiting efforts are enhanced; Broadway, film and television actor audition numbers grow
- 1983 The "star" is introduced as the symbol and logo for the Playhouse

Apprentices become more widely recognized for their contributing roles in the success of professional summer theaters
- 1984 The Playhouse is first summer stock theater to debut *The Fantasticks* – the longest running Off-Broadway musical
- 1985 Playhouse signs on to an Actors' Equity Association CORST (Council of Resident Stock Theaters) contract and becomes the only Equity CORST theater in Vermont
- 1986 Chuck Tobin signs on as assistant producer

Subscriptions get a 10% increase and the Playhouse a 30% audience increase from the previous year
- 1987 *Nunsense*, the 1986 musical winner of the New York Outer Circle Award is staged and performs to sold out capacity

A mixture of musicals, comedies, and mysteries becomes the mainstay line up for the Playhouse

- 1988 *And A Nightingale Sang* is awarded the Moss Hart Memorial Award Honorable Mention at the New England Theater Conference
- 1989 *Boy Next Door* performance is highly applauded and recognized for bringing to light the story of living with disabilities
- 1990 *Nunsense* is brought back to due popular demand; actors from New York original production perform in Playhouse production
- 1991 Popular 90's plays are staged – *Rumors* and *Lend Me A Tenor*
- 1992 Commitment remains to produce plays to attract and be enjoyed by a wide range of audiences; *I Hate Hamlet* and *Prelude To A Kiss* are staged
- 1993 Season is dedicated to the McCarthy's – Michael McCarthy celebrates 90th birthday
- Joanne Rathgeb makes her final stage appearance in *Marvin's Room*
- 1994 Joanne Rathgeb passes away
- 1995 Don and Joanne's daughter, Laura Rathgeb becomes co-producer
- 1997 Rathgeb O'Brien Rathgeb, Inc. final season
- 1998 Chuck Tobin named as managing director, with Cathy Hurst and Peter Harrigan as co-artistic directors.
- Saint Michael's Playhouse becomes an auxiliary enterprise of Saint Michael's College
- 1999 *Jesus Christ Superstar* is produced
- 2000 Broadway actor Kenneth Kimmins returns to the Playhouse in Neil Simon's *Barefoot in the Park*
- 2001 Playhouse production of *Always ... Patsy Cline* receives the Burlington City Arts' People's Choice Award for Best Play; *Always* stars Kristi Brannon as Patsy Cline and Sarah Carleton as Louise
- 2002 John Devlin is named Production Manager

- 2003 Broadway actors Kenneth Kimmins and Lisa Raggio appear together in Playhouse production of *Something's Afoot*
- 2004 Chuck Tobin assumes full leadership as Producing Artistic Director
- Playhouse becomes member of Theatre Communications Group, the national organization that works to nurture and promote non-profit professional theater
- 2005 New season opens with *Big River*, which becomes the biggest selling show in Playhouse history
- Playhouse produces *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, the first episode in Neil Simon's Brighton Beach trilogy
- 2006 Playhouse stages *The Pirates of Penzance*, which breaks box office records of previous year.
- Second play in the Brighton Beach trilogy, *Biloxi Blues* is produced
- 2007 60th Anniversary is celebrated.
- Subscription and single ticket sales continue to rise with an overall 50% increase.
- Playhouse completes Brighton Beach trilogy with sold-out production of *Broadway Bound*
- 2008 Playhouse implements new ticketing system offering online ticket sales

to be continued...