

# THE GRIFFIN

NEWSLETTER OF THE HISTORIC IRONWOOD THEATRE

WINTER 2020-21

## A MIDWEST GEM AND NATIONAL TREASURE

by Bruce Greenhill, Ops Manager

Back in 2002, Chicago dentist, Dr. Tom Peacock wandered into the Ironwood Theatre. His gaze was immediately drawn to the shiny gold organ in the orchestra pit. Lucky for us, Dr. Tom was intrigued by the aged, broken down keyboard instrument, and asked the theatre board if he might attempt to restore it. Knowing nothing about pipe organs, Dr. Tom sought advice from Ken Weupper of Saginaw's Temple Theatre who shared his knowledge.

So began a fifteen-year program of restoration, intense learning, and formation of lasting friendships. Interviewed recently for this Griffin article, Dr. Tom stated "...my involvement in bringing the Barton back to life may be one of the noblest things I've ever done in my life." Whether it was spending days soldering more than 700 console wiring joints, or re-leathering 230 combination actions, or organizing annual three-day working bees for the 6-8 people he recruited to join him in his endeavors, or getting to know professional organ builder Rick Helderop, Dr. Tom smiles when he says it was always a labor of love. His estate plan includes a bequest to be used specifically for Barton organ maintenance.

In the glory days of 1920s theatre construction, more than 300 Barton Organs were installed throughout the Midwest. Thanks to the work of Dr. Tom and those volunteers who worked tirelessly with him over the years, we now proudly state that the Ironwood Theatre

is home to one of only six fully restored Barton organs, still in its original place of installation. 🦋



DR. TOM PEACOCK

## From the President

In this unprecedented time, non-profit arts organizations like the Historic Ironwood Theatre have been particularly hard hit. Our doors are closed, our seats are empty, and our stage is silent. Nevertheless, we remain steadfast in our commitment to provide a place of entertainment, education, laughter, and inspiration.



ZONA WICK

As HIT is a non-profit institution dependent on ticket sales and donations, our budgets, in the best of times, are lean. Despite this, we take seriously the idea that we are good stewards of contributed money, and are proud of the local, regional and world-class talent you see on our stage. But today, we are being greatly challenged and we turn to our friends, our audiences, and our long time supporters to stand with us as we all adapt to the current reality.

What are we doing currently?

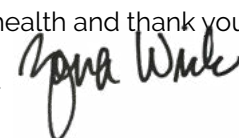
- We are following recommendations from Federal, State and Local officials and we have cancelled, postponed, or rescheduled all shows through June.
- Our staff, Bruce and Lori, continue to work to insure that our historic theatre is safe and being maintained. Volunteers on site, such our maintenance crew, bookkeeper and Barton Organ players, are observing social distancing.
- Our office is closed to the public, but we are taking voice mail and reaching out to patrons through emails and phone.

Though the theatre is currently dark, we remain committed to providing you with limited music events. Please check out Ten Minute Tuesdays weekly at 6:00 p.m.

If your personal circumstances allow, please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the theatre and joining us as a Supporter. A gift in any amount will be greatly appreciated. When the threat of COVID-19 has finally passed - and it will pass - we will re-open our doors and welcome you, your family and our entire community back to the experiences you have come to expect at the HIT.

We wish you good health and thank you for your support. 🦋

HIT Board President



# LET'S TALK

by Vivian Meradeth Gammill

*"Though the stage at HIT is deserted and silent, a voice can yet be heard. Vivian Gammill, actress and activist, has a message for all of us." Zona Wick, HIT Board of Directors President*

I wish this wasn't a conversation we had to have. I desperately wish that it was the content of one's character that mattered instead of the color of one's skin. Unfortunately, some time ago, someone decided to make the outward differences between the human species important and incendiary. They labeled this violent segregation of humanity - race.

Much of America's dark history towards Black people has only broken the surface of the mainstream in the last ten years. We have an extended background of turning away from the truth when it's too difficult to face. The reality is America has made many beautiful and innovative contributions to the world. But it has also produced some of its most awful nightmares. Rather than saying, "Make American great again," we must be willing to say, "We strive for greatness." After all, a great country is continually evolving, not resting on its past successes.

In present-day Ironwood I have heard children know they didn't learn these words on their own. Their parents, friends, neighbors, the internet? The origin is of little importance. What truly matters is that people are comfortable using derogatory racial slurs and they say them so casually. If you cringe reading this, you might reconsider saying nigger behind closed doors, or allowing people to get away with saying it in bars, at family gatherings, or work parties. I am multi-ethnic. I don't say these words. They are offensive.

Racism and all of the patterns of behavior need immediate action. as vehemently against. If we can't we will continue to dissolve as a States while there is still us vs. that people don't want this someone at some point off; but we have to deal the pain and reality. Only we heal the scars that See Vivian's full article on



Vivian Meradeth Gammill

using derogatory words such as nigger. I own. Who did they learn these words comfortable using derogatory racial words. They are offensive.

of complacency, ignorance and It is something that we must all be come to an agreement on this, then country. There can be no United them, black vs. white. I understand to be a black or white issue, but put a label on it. We can take it with it, to acknowledge after acceptance can racism has left behind. www.ironwoodtheatre.net

## PULLING OUT ALL THE STOPS



Jill Halberg at the Barton console

If you know anything about Barton organs, you know they can be a little temperamental. Anyone who has played or worked with a Barton refers to these idiosyncrasies as Barton-itis. The best cure is the regular playing of the organ. That is why we created our Barton-itis No More team, a group of 10 volunteers who ensure the Barton is played twice each week.

One member of that team is Jill Halberg. Like many of our volunteers, Jill has a long history of connection with HIT. Born in Wakefield, Jill has happy childhood memories of seeing movies at HIT. She was educated at NMU and GCC

followed by a 33-year nursing career at Grandview, during which time she participated in a number of the "Follies" shows. Sponsored by Grandview, that annual variety show featured many of the doctors and nursing staff strutting their stuff on the Ironwood stage.

In an earlier life, Jill also graced the HIT stage as a participant in the Miss Gogebic County pageant. When she retired, Jill decided she wanted to give back to her community. Asked recently about her involvement in the Barton-itis No More team Jill responded: "We are thrilled and honored to be part of the team that is helping to preserve this beautifully unique piece of America's cultural heritage." We at HIT are thrilled that Jill and her husband Mark make time available every month to play our Grand Old Lady.



Operation of the Historic Ironwood Theatre is supported in part by a grant from the Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs and the National Endowment for the Arts.

GRIFFIN layout/design by SHARP GRAPHIC DESIGN

# LET YOUR LEGACY *Linger* AT HIT

Planned Giving is an enduring way to show your love and support for the performing arts and the Historic Ironwood Theatre. Help ensure that your children have access to the life-changing experiences enjoyed by generations of Gogebic Range and northern Wisconsin residents and visitors.



Like Dr. Tom Peacock, you could leave a lasting impact on the quality of life of future generations. There are many ways to support HIT through your estate plan by simply stating a dollar amount in your will or a percentage of your residual estate after gifts to loved ones and expenses are paid, by naming the Ironwood Theatre as a charity beneficiary of an IRA, or you can give a specific asset, such as securities or other marketable property. As with any financial matters, we recommend discussing your plan with an attorney or qualified financial planner. 🗨️

**MAKE A DIFFERENCE BY GIVING, IF NOT NOW,  
IN THE FUTURE. LEAVE A LEGACY.**

## *Until We Meet Again*

by Vic Calore, Programming Committee/Artist Liaison

2020 started off with what would have been one of the Historic Ironwood Theatre's best years ever. The SISU Ski Fest's concert with Copper Box, ABBA MANIA, and Layne Yost's tribute to the music of John Denver were incredibly successful...and then it all went dark.

COVID-19 resulted in the rest of our live shows being canceled, but we are happy to report that most of them will be rescheduled. We are working with local dance companies to bring back spring recitals in June. Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Denny Laine from the Moody Blues and Wings is interested in rescheduling. The Blooze Brothers Band from Chicago is rescheduled for July 24th and Tim Mesun and Friends plan to be back for the July Barton Organ fundraiser. All McCartney Live will be back to perform their tribute to Paul McCartney August. Back by popular demand, The Linda Ronstadt Experience with Tristan McIntosh, is being considered as a return event. Prairie Fire Children's

## NEW HIT BOARD TREASURERS

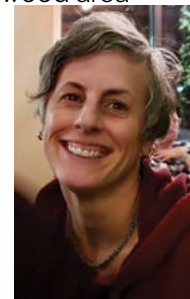
The Historic Ironwood Theatre would like to welcome Bob Kovar and Stacy Brostoski as Interim Co-Treasurers for the 20/21 season.

Bob Kovar has been a year-round resident of Manitowish Waters since 1979. He managed a cranberry marsh for 25 years and then in 1995 turned his interests to developing organizations and projects that focused on environmental, educational, public health, tribal justice, sovereignty and anti-racism projects across the North and throughout Wisconsin. Bob has been a founding board member of several non-profits in the region that work to protect and preserve the wide range of natural, cultural and historic resources in our area and he enjoys the challenges of telling our stories while advocating for resources in a world that often is under-informed about our unique needs and offerings. Bob has been a longtime fan of the Historic Ironwood Theatre and is excited to be a part of the team working projects to review, simplify and improve the Theatre's tracking and reporting capabilities.



BOB KOVAR

Stacy Brostoski has been connected to the Ironwood area since 2009 and recently returned full time. She worked 19 years in corporate finance with responsibilities related to analysis, strategy, and optimization. Stacy has a love of history and performance with particular fondness for dance and costume. She will help the Theatre understand it's financial performance and trends, refine mid and long term financial goals and strategies, and to budget accordingly.

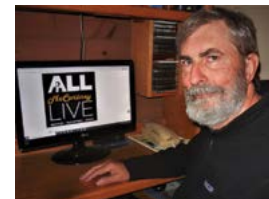


STACY BROSTOSKI

Although this year has made it difficult for the Theatre to provide live performances, it's a good time to complete projects which require more attention than is available during a busy show season. Bob and Stacy will take this opportunity to complete important projects which might normally be difficult to address. If you have an interest in volunteering with finance or accounting projects please feel free to contact us! 🗨️

Theatre will be here the week of June 21-26th with two performances of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" on June 26th. The show is sponsored by our local United Way.

Art's Midwest World Fest is still planning spring and fall dates in 2021/22 for Hadar Moaz from Israel, Choor from China and Hikaru from Japan. These international bands spend the week in our community working with the children in our schools. Andrew Rogers will return in October 2021 to score and perform another silent film on the Barton Organ. Along with these events, we will be looking at bringing you some of your favorite local entertainers as well as a surprise big name. We appreciate your patience and understanding during this time, and we look forward to welcoming you back to the Historic Ironwood Theatre when it is safe to do so. 🗨️



VIC CALORE



**THEATRE BOX OFFICE**  
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 PLEASE CALL BOX OFFICE AND LEAVE A MESSAGE.  
 WE WILL RETURN YOUR CALL.



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Even the darkest night will end and the sun will rise! *Les Misérables*

### TEN MINUTE TUESDAYS

Back in April when it became apparent that HIT would be dark for an extended period of time, we introduced Ten Minute Tuesdays (TMT), with the first episode on May 5th featuring Tim Mesun on the Barton Organ. Thirty-plus shows later (and perhaps 50 or more before we reopen) we are proud of these weekly mini-concerts featuring local performing artists, both young and old. The quality of the performances is outstanding – we are blessed to have such diverse talent in our area. From the large number of very positive Facebook comments and steady growth in the number of weekly viewers, it is obvious the shows are a hit for HIT! Upcoming Ten Minute Tuesdays will include more from Tim Mesun and the Barton, Kate Averitt and Heartstrings, Liz Mathias, and a few special surprises. We will also present repeat performances by Ethan Puisto, Andy Makey and Friends, Don Dugan and Bob Michaels, Dave Cormier, Cas Bordner, a peek inside the “guts” of the Barton, dance performances by

instructors and students from local dance studios, the history of our beautiful murals, and perhaps (if we can record safely) a show or two featuring local school vocalists and musicians. We might even dig into the video archives to feature a past “real” performance or two – so stay tuned. Our thanks to those of you who have used the Facebook and website donation link to support TMT, and a big shout-out to our sponsors – Thrivent Financial, and Brookside Insurance. We also want to thank the tech crews and videographers who help put the shows together. While TMTs will never replace the joy and fellowship of sharing the experience of live performances in our glorious theatre, they do allow us to connect – albeit remotely – with performers and with one another. They also give us a reason to fire up the Aurora Street marquee sign. It is a small gesture on our part to say thank you for your support, your participation, and your love of the performing arts – and we miss you! 



Cas Bordner



Andy, Kyle and Neal



Ethan Puisto