
CRAIG WASNER & JOHN GRIMM
CORDIALLY INVITE YOU TO ATTEND...

HILLTOP Happenings

PIZZA, PERFORMERS, & PLENTY OF PIZZAZZ!

An ongoing program that brings entertainment, enjoyment, and inspiration to the folks of South Central MN

On eight Sundays during the year, there's a little bit of magic in Montgomery, Minnesota.

Early in the afternoon, a two-story brick building with "1892" inscribed near the peak of its roof opens its doors, and the aroma of fresh buttered popcorn beckons from the second story. Music and laughter echo throughout the vintage concert hall as musicians rehearse and patrons begin to stroll in, claiming seats at a series of long tables.

Promptly at 4 p.m., the fun begins. Led by proprietor John Grimm, a troupe of performers gathers on stage to join in a lively theme song during which members are introduced. For the next two hours, guests enjoy a diverse mix of music and entertainment ranging from popular standards to concert hall classics; from goofy comedy and colorful costumes to inspirational gospel and harmonic collaborations.



At intermission, fresh piping-hot pizza from Pizzeria 201 is available for two bucks a slice, served with friendly smiles at "Shannon's Snack Bar" (the kitchenette at the back of the hall).



The nine regular troupe members hail from Montgomery, Le Sueur, New Prague, and Northfield; guest performers occasionally appear as well. The audience, which numbers between 50 and 150, consists mainly of self-proclaimed "groupies" that have made this event a regular ritual. Often, buses arrive from as far away as Belle Plaine, and since the series began in March of 2012, faithful guests have begun to recognize each other and mingle during intermission.

First-time visitors are generally mesmerized by the warm splendor of the hall, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. Host John Grimm purchased the building in the early 1990's "to save a significantly historic building" and "to create a place where local folks could perform." (Occasionally he'll treat the crowd to an *a cappella* vocal solo, *sans* microphone, to demonstrate the hall's superior acoustics.)



During restoration, Grimm made every effort to repair or replicate the original architectural details, from the wood floor and lush carpeting to the ceiling mural and antique chandelier. But certain quirky bohemian accents (such as the painting of the “Big Honza” character on one stage wall) suggest that the theater, much like the host, balances excellence with a charming touch of eccentricity!



The ambiance is perfect for this diverse, family-friendly, and time-honored form of entertainment. In any given show, audience responses may range from awed admiration to chuckles, hoots, and the occasional dab of an eye. Some are even inspired to “trip the light fantastic” at the rear of the theater, where local crafters are sometimes invited to sell their wares.

As breathtaking talent mixes with lighthearted entertainment against a backdrop of down-to-earth elegance, fans of this event have a sense that they are witnessing something that is both very special and truly “Minnesotan.”



THE HILLTOP HAPPENINGS TROUPE

Regular members include Jesse Beulke, Howard Braith, Maren Brogger, Mary Lou and Wade Fradenburgh, John Grimm, Craig Wasner, Lynn and Mark Wilms, and Wendy Zaske



JESSE BEULKE, a 2012 graduate of Montgomery-Lonsdale High School (TCU), performs breathtaking classical piano selections along with original compositions. He wrote and conducted his first symphonic wind ensemble piece, *Rise*, during his senior year in high school; he has also written chamber music, solo piano, and orchestral/film score music. His compositions have been performed and recorded by many different musicians - his first choral piece, *Sanctus*, was premiered in 2013 and published in 2014. Currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in Vocal Music Education at Minnesota State University, Mankato, he will graduate in December of 2016, and plans on continuing for a Master's degree in choral conducting.



HOWARD BRAITH, drummer, was born in Wadena, MN, and later moved to St. Patrick. Having been interested in music since he was a youngster, he also plays bass and guitar. He graduated from New Prague High School and currently lives with his wife, Doreen, near New Prague. He has three grown children and is a grandfather to six. He has been involved in music at church and other places since he was very young, and continues to do so to this day. He has over 30 years of experience as an auto technician, and his hobbies are fishing, X-boxing with his kids, and playing pool.

MAREN (WASNER) BROGGER, vocalist, pianist, and guitarist, is the daughter of Craig Wasner. After graduating from college she moved to Nashville, TN to pursue a career in the music industry where she worked for MTV Networks. After almost 10 years she moved back to be closer to family and is working for a super-load transportation company in Northfield, MN. She got married in the summer of 2013 to a custom cabinetmaker named Karl on her parents' farm. Besides music, she enjoys spreadsheets, morning coffee, and watching her husband race sailboats.

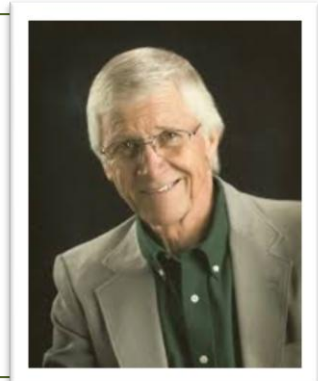


MARY LOU (BIROS) FRADENBURGH, vocalist, was born and raised in Minneapolis, graduating from Holy Angels Academy when it was an all girls' school. Her singing ability was evident early in life, spending hours listening to the radio and playing her 45 rpm records (of which she still has hundreds). Her recall of lyrics is simply phenomenal. She has sung all her life in different bands, churches, weddings, funerals, senior homes, and now Hilltop Hall. She and her husband Wade met because of music, when a mutual friend of theirs asked Wade to accompany Mary Lou at a company Christmas dinner in 1984. They were married two years later.



WADE FRADENBURGH plays bass, sings, and occasionally performs in skits. He grew up in Scott County near Lydia and graduated from Jordan High School. His family is very musical. As a family they sang at different functions in churches. He learned to play guitar and clarinet at the age of 10 and later picked up the piano and bass guitar. He currently is a bass player at his church. Wade and Mary Lou had a band when they got married called The Turning Point. In fact, they played at a 50th wedding anniversary the day after their wedding!

JOHN GRIMM, proprietor and host, performs as a singer, actor, comedian, and impersonator - often with original skits and compositions (he's written over 100 songs). An Air Force veteran and former airline pilot, he moved to Montgomery in 1992. He's been a parent to 12 children and a foster parent to over 100. He has served as Le Sueur County Commissioner, Board President of Mobilize Montgomery, and Grand Marshal of Kolacky Days; and in 2011, he was a candidate for the District 25 Senate seat. As owner of Pizzeria 201, he conducts Hilltop Dinner Theater tours, and most recently purchased and remodeled a local resort to become "The Harbor," a residence designed especially for veterans.



CRAIG WASNER plays keyboards and guitar, sings, composes, and operates a recording studio. He studied music at the University of Minnesota/Duluth and Berklee College of Music in Boston. He has performed with national recording artists (including two Grammy Award winners) on 5 different labels. Through his annual Craig Wasner & Friends Benefit for World Vision concerts, he has raised over \$500,000 through tickets and donations. He also serves as band leader for the Over & Back benefit shows (providing aid to 55 local charities) and as Music Coordinator for the Northfield High Schools Rock and Roll Revival concerts. He lives on a small farm near Northfield, Minnesota with his wife, Linda. He has three adult children and twin grandchildren.

LYNN (WESTLAND) WILMS hails from New Richland, Minnesota. A music graduate of the University of Northern Iowa, she has been a minister of music in several churches, directing choirs, leading contemporary worship groups, and playing piano, organ, and a number of other instruments. She has also given vocal and instrumental lessons her whole career to children and adults. Her work included teaching in an international school in Bogotá, South America while her husband, Mark, worked in mass media. They have five foreign exchange daughters who still call them Mom and Dad. Lynn has a love for music of all kinds, and a love for people.



MARK WILMS was a radio disc jockey and TV weatherman before becoming a Lutheran minister. He and his wife of 44 years, Lynn, met in college and together served on the mission field in Bogotá, South America, where Mark was a media advisor for the Colombian Lutheran Church. After ordination into the ministry, Mark served parishes from rural Nebraska to the south side of Chicago. In 2015 he made a career change to interim ministry, serving his first assignment at St. John in Montgomery, Minnesota. Mark learned piano as a youth and sang in church choir, leading to a love for singing both sacred and secular music with Lynn.

WENDY (WILLIAMS) ZASKE sings hits from the 1920's-1990's in originally-designed costumes. During her senior year at Robbinsdale High School, she received scholarship awards for classical piano from the Schubert Club and the Minnesota Music Teachers' Association; she also studied violin and sang in church choir. With an honors degree in English from the University of Minnesota, she's worked as a graphic artist, writer, DJ/KJ, recreation coordinator, Chamber of Commerce administrator, and radio host. She and husband Tony (who operates the sound booth) met in 1986 when they were nightclub DJs; they later established mobile entertainment services in Minnesota and California. They currently live near Le Sueur with a dog, seven cats, and way too much stuff.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

CRAIG WASNER & JOHN GRIMM
PROUDLY ANNOUNCE THE 5TH SEASON OF
HILLTOP Happenings
PIZZA, PERFORMERS, & PLENTY OF PIZZAZZ!

NO ADMISSION CHARGED! Donations accepted to help defray production & overhead expenses.

Hilltop Hall ~ 206 First St. N., Montgomery, MN

SEASON FIVE BEGINS IN MARCH, 2016!
(No shows in Dec. 2015, Jan. or Feb. 2016) • March 20 • April 24 • May 22 • June 26 •
(No show in July) • Aug. 28 • Sept. 25 • Oct. 30 • Nov. 27 • (No show in Dec. 2016)
*PLEASE NOTE: THE EARLIER DATES IN MARCH AND MAY 2016 ARE DUE TO HOLIDAYS FALLING ON THE LAST SUNDAY OF THOSE MONTHS.

It's hard to believe that we'll be starting our fifth year in March! The 2016 Hilltop Happenings series will truly have something for everyone: familiar standards, popular favorites, show tunes, original compositions, concert hall classics, inspirational gospel, harmonic collaborations, costumes and comedy. Regular troupe members (above, left to right) now include Jesse Beulke, Howard Braith, Maren Brogger, Mary Lou and Wade Fradenburgh, John Grimm, Craig Wasner, Lynn Wilms, Mark Wilms, and Wendy Zaske; additional guests often appear. It's a unique mix of breathtaking talent, lighthearted entertainment, and tasty snacks - all in one lovely historic place. Don't miss a single show!

SODA, SNACKS, SUPPER - IT'S ALL HERE!
Pop & popcorn sold throughout...Pizza from Pizzeria 301 sold at intermission.

The Hilltop Happenings Series is an ongoing program that brings entertainment, enjoyment, and inspiration to the folk of South Central Minnesota.
Find more information at <http://www.bighonza.com/hilltop-hall/>

ALL SHOWS BEGIN AT 4:00 P.M. - BRING YOUR FRIENDS - SEE YOU THERE!

Graphics by W. Zaske - wendyzaske@yahoo.com

Hilltop Hall is located at 206 First Street North in Montgomery, MN. The Arts & Heritage Center and Posy Pantry gift shop are downstairs, and the theater is upstairs. Additional parking and a handicapped-accessible entry can be found in the rear of the building off the alley.

Hilltop Happenings variety shows generally take place on the last Sunday of each month (except the winter months of December, January, and February; and July, due to the local Kolacky Days Festival). With two adjustments for holidays, dates for 2016 are: March 20, April 24, May 22, June 26, (No show in July), Aug. 28, Sept. 25, Oct. 30, and Nov. 27. Admission is free, although donations are accepted to help defray production and overhead costs. A flyer with performance schedule is distributed at every show; e-mailed reminders are available upon request. If you would like to be added to the e-mail contact list, please send a request to hilltopupdates@gmail.com. For more information about the series, call John Grimm at (612) 756-1075.