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## Firehouse Theater's 1968-69 Performances: Censorship on Campus

Peggy L. Roske

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## Censorship on Campus:



*lights a few fires*

<http://snaccooperative.org/ark:/99166/w6285t58> "Firehouse Theater Company"  
(text) and

<https://hclib.tumblr.com/post/105988079784/firehouse-theater-holiday-program-special> (logo)

# FIREHOUSE THEATER

MINNEHANA at LAKE STREET ■ PHONE 721-6541

In the summer of 1963, a University of Minnesota graduate student, an artist, an actor, and an actor/director renovated an abandoned 1894 fire station in Minneapolis as the Firehouse Theater.

The company held its first performance just a few weeks before the Guthrie Theater held their opening show.

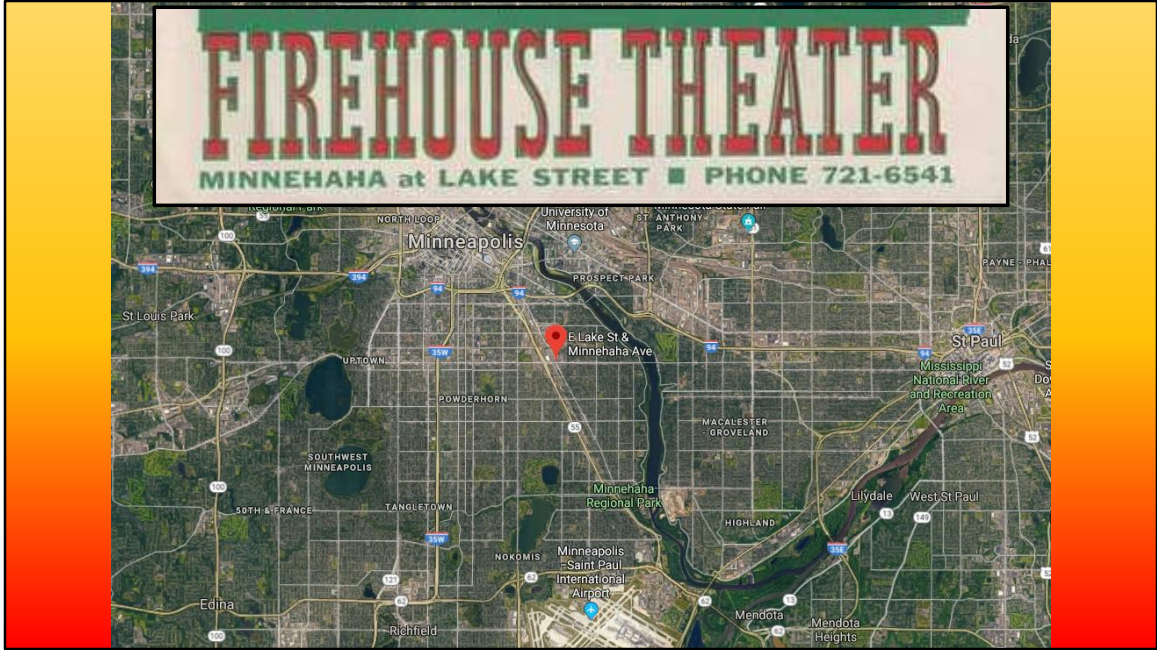
The group conceived the theater as a venue for avant-garde drama and as a vehicle for new playwrights in the area.

The Firehouse company moved to California in 1969 and closed not long after.

***But first they lit a few fires at St. Ben's and St. John's!***

<http://snaccooperative.org/ark:/99166/w6285t58> "Firehouse Theater Company" (text) and

<https://hclib.tumblr.com/post/105988079784/firehouse-theater-holiday-program-special> (logo)



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## Mixed Blood Theater celebrates Black History Month at CSB

by Sarah Horsager  
Independent arts editor

The Mixed Blood Theater, in celebration of Black History Month, performed "Daughters of Africa" Wednesday, Feb. 10, in the Benedicta Art Center Forum. The show presents a dynamic history of black American women and their stories of courage and strength.

"Daughters of Africa," written by award-winning playwright Syl Jones, featured Patricia Pendelton accompanied by pianist Roland Wilson and was directed by Warren C. Bowles.

The performance consists of a musical look into the history of black American women, rather than the history of black American men. Throughout history, black women have faced unique situations because of their cultural roles, and "Daughters of Africa," recognizes and commends black women who have carved their place in America's history.

"Ideally women's history shouldn't be necessary," said Jill Schlick, a senior history major at CSB.

However Schlick also goes on to say that much of what

we've recorded historically is political, a realm from which women were, until recently, excluded. And women have often made historical advancement at different times and in different ways than men, so women's history must be recognized and studied.

Celebrated in the program are dynamic and influential women like Harriet Tubman; the conductor of the Underground Railroad, who led hundreds of blacks to freedom; Elizabeth Freeman, whose legal struggle helped abolish slavery in Massachusetts; and Madame C.J. Walker, America's first black millionairess. The songs included in the performance are melodies made famous by Bessie Smith, Lena Horne, Janet Jackson as well as a list of others.

"Daughters of Africa," is only one of six touring productions offered by The Mixed Blood Theater, who bases itself in a century-old firehouse in Minneapolis. The others include biographical accounts on Martin Luther King, Paul Robeson, and Jackie Robinson; "According to Coyote," a collection of Native American legends; "Eastern Parade The Asian American Journey and, coming in the fall of 1993, "Minne-canno," about growing up Chicano in Minnesota.

(Not to be confused with the *Mixed Blood Theater*, which has also performed at CSB, and which also is located in a converted Minneapolis firehouse.)

1501 South Fourth St.  
Minneapolis, MN 55454

"Daughters of Africa," is only one of six touring productions offered by The Mixed Blood Theater, who bases itself in a century-old firehouse in Minneapolis.

1993 02 16 p. 15

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/3348/rec/6>

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The Mixed Blood Theatre Company is a professional multiracial theatre company in Minneapolis, Minnesota. It was founded in 1976 by artistic director Jack Reuler.

- Wikipedia

Logo from Wikipedia

Photo:

[https://www.google.com/maps/place/1501+S+4th+St,+Minneapolis,+MN+55454/@44.9710483,-](https://www.google.com/maps/place/1501+S+4th+St,+Minneapolis,+MN+55454/@44.9710483,-93.2491493,3a,75y,211.45h,91.63t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sgq6kAlz2gXbakegvbMXnp g!2e0!7i13312!8i6656!4m5!3m4!1s0x52b32d42db4c90ef:0x88424ac4104d0b1e!8m2!3d44.970849!4d-93.2493193)

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NEWS BULLETIN FROM THE COLLEGE OF ST. BENEDICT IN ST. JOSEPH, MINNESOTA

FOR: IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: OCTOBER 4

Copies to: weeklies  
Lakies  
TV 7ns  
visitors  
all cath. papers on list  
radio stations

**FIRST MAJOR DRAMA OFFERING OF THE SEASON SET FOR OCT. 13 AT COLLEGE**

FIRST MAJOR DRAMA OFFERING OF THE SEASON SET FOR OCTOBER 13 AT COLLEGE

ST. JOSEPH, Minn. --- Two "transformation" plays, performed by the Firehouse Theatre Company from Minneapolis, will open the 1968-69 season of drama at the College of St. Benedict Sunday (October 13).

Set for 8 p.m., the plays are open to the public. Admission prices are \$2.60 for adults and \$1.55 for students. Both plays will be in the Benedicta Arts Center Forum.

Titled "Keep Tightly Closed in a Cool Dry Place" and "Trunty", the plays are by Megan Terry and Nancy Walter, respectively.

Miss Terry also is the author of "Viet Rock" which was performed at the College last year. Miss Walter is a member of the Firehouse troupe.

Both plays opened very recently in Minneapolis at the Firehouse Theatre.

**October 4, 1968  
press release**

1968 10 04 Firehouse press release  
The BAC opened in fall 1964.

## FIREHOUSE: HOT EVENING AT BAC

Are you a radical? Do you consider yourself as having radical views?

Undoubtedly, most of you answered with a profound "no". The majority try not to be radical, or a significant way more.

But radical is a word every one uses. In fact, the word has lost its meaning of the original, or "radical".

So, take stock to see if you do. Fundamental views are on Oct. 13 the Firehouse Theatre of Minneapolis will be bringing some "radical" one-act plays to the Benedicta Arts Center.

The two one-act plays are "Trunty" by Nancy Walter and "Keep Tightly Closed in a Cool, Dry Place" by Megan Terry. Both shows are scheduled to open at the Firehouse Theatre in Minneapolis Oct. 4.

"Cool Dry Place" looks at a triangle of convicted murderers in a single jail cell. It tends to look like the Thompson murder situation. Playwright Terry is also author of "Viet Rock", which was presented in the Experimental Series here at St. Ben's last season.

"Trunty" is a treatment of sex," stated Sister Colman, chairman of the Theatre Department. "It is, however, more than a merely sensual or sensational treatment. Designed to titillate the adolescent theatre-goer in the manner of a 'Playboy' photo. Instead, it probes deeply into an issue that really matters in our time, by asking, 'Is sex the answer to our hunger for communion?'"

"In asking such a question, so-called 'sexy' scenes

may be artistically necessary for the playwright to work through to a truthful answer. Hopefully, our audience will be mature enough to follow the play's probing to the point

Oct. 13 the Firehouse Theatre of Minneapolis will be bringing some "radical" one-act plays to the Benedicta Arts Center.

of insight, rather than becoming shocked on the journey toward the vision."

"Now, sex is obviously an issue that matters, but when you're dealing with any 'radical' issue, people tend to become upset," Sister Colman explained.

Firehouse Company "strives to lay open the center, challenge socio-political manifestations and declare its objections, fuse a union of experimentation and the old truths."

Sydney Walter, director of the new Firehouse production "Rags", has this to say of the expanding into the Realm of the "radical" or "avant-garde".

"By penetrating beneath dead concepts (eg. plays that deal with sex are sordid), Firehouse aims to point out that we are not what we think we are. Most of us live through a labyrinth of persons, each distinct and different from the other."

So, if you've got any "dead concepts", or think you are the least bit "radical", shed your dead concepts, pick up a little radicalism, and enjoy these two one-act plays Oct. 13 at 8:00 in the BAC.

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## THE TORCH

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF THE COLLEGE OF SAINT BENEDICT

OCTOBER 8, 1968

"What the Firehouse Company tries to do is not merely to entertain, but to delve into issues that matter and make the people aware of them.

"Now, sex is obviously an issue that matters, but when you're dealing with any 'radical' issue, people tend to become upset," Sister Colman explained.

Firehouse Company "strives to lay open the center, challenge socio-political manifestations and declare its objections, fuse a union of experimentation and the old truths."

October 8, 1968



Page 1 of the next issue of *The Torch* has a feature on the reopening of the local hangout for college students...

...and two of its eight pages are about the Firehouse production, including Letters to the Editor...

October 29, 1968

- 1968 10 29 p. 1
- <http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/108/rec/34> and
- p. 2 <http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/109/rec/34>
- p. 3 <http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/110/rec/3>









## HOUSE OF FIRE

What is theater and where is it going are two of the most frequently asked questions. Since many of you have posed these questions of late, I will attempt a few possible answers.

To hazard a definite theater is risky, but I can be said that the constituted by men acting for their fellow men a icular vision (the playw etc.) of life. The thea usually viewed as either tainment (The Fantasti place where we go to esca derive pleasure, or edu tex, "A Touch of the I By educative, I mean tha is searching or seeking honest vision of himsel environment, his role in his environment, and even for the supernatural.

The expansion of man's vision gives him the opportunity to accept a way of life, rather than accept one. Man probes through with the actor to find out how free he is and how much late enters in to control his life.

Then, in order to fulfill this definition, the elements necessary are actor and audience. It may be argued that a play-wright's vision (script) is necessary also, but there is in the theater improvisation in which each particular person can offer his own vision and work out with his fellow actors.

a common vision in front of the audience.

Let us then conclude that the theater is constituted of actors, an audience, and a vision which the actors express through their action and dialogues.

**WHERE IS THE THEATRE GOING?**


Probably the most influential man in determining the current direction of the theater is a Frenchman - Antonio Artaud.

Artaud: "The theater invites the mind of society to share a delirium which the theater aults its energies. It supplies, see that from the his vision of view, the action sees the is beneficial, for im of man to to see themselves a infinite in it causes the mask veals the lie, the a area of baseness, and hypot discovered world; it shakes the prove a ing inertia of matte a world vades even this cle by people, many of the senses by a belief vealing to collectivi be theater their dark power, it should do then, is begin to force, it invites give us a vision of ourselves take, in the face of that by recognition of various superior and heroic aspects of our beings we are able they never would have assumed to purge ourselves of them. (By without it."

purgation I do not mean an Now I may use a concrete elimination, but rather a recog- example of the recognition and nition which frees us, to a cer- purgation I spoke of. For we, tain degree, of their power with the recognition of our dark over us.) power, that which allows us to manipulate people are enabled to transcend it with a conscious alertness to it; to love each other honestly without selfish manipulation. We are able to rise above our selfishness by conscious decision, rather than

The kind of theater Artaud advocates is one not of dialogue, but rather of physical expression which is able to transcend the confines of the verbal and go beyond to probe the state of being that cannot be reduced to words.

CONT. PAGE 8



## THE TORCH

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF THE COLLEGE OF SAINT JOSEPH

The theater then is striving to achieve a necessity within one's life. The theater of protest, Black theater, environmental theater, and improvisational theater have developed from such a praiseworthy striving.

**By Jan Bentley**

(a communications/theater major)

Con't from P. 3

hide behind an illusion of purity. The theater then is striving to achieve a necessity within one's life. The theater of protest, Black theater, environmental theater, and improvisational theater have developed from such a praiseworthy striving.

**By Jan Bentley**

October 29, 1968

1968 10 29 p. 3 <http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/110/rec/3>  
 and  
 p. 8 <http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/115/rec/3>



Play Review

# A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To My Seat

by Meda Ellen Sexton

This fall Mike Steele, theatre critic for the Minneapolis Tribune, did a study of avant garde theatre. The question of smut came up; "smut for smut sake may not be art but it has been good social criticism." These words came to mind more than once when as I saw the Firehouse Theatre Company in the production of Faust last Sunday night.

Nobody goes to the Firehouse with the sole intention of viewing a play. If that is what you have in mind it is discarded from the minute you walk in the door. Each member of the audience is a participant—the amount of participation depends on whether you came to see Faust or be Faust.

sisted mainly of four-letter words uncomfortably forced from the actors as they crawled snakelike or lept feverishly among the audience. This roaming and jumping about was broken-up for a moment by a senseless strip scene of four members of the cast. There was no purpose or reasoning for it—The Firehouse did it once in Jack Jack and it was a success, true beauty and innocence was portrayed, so they thought they'd try it again—A clear case of overdoing a good thing.

The language, the games with the audience, and the strip act were mere incongruities - little asides taking up a greater portion of the show thrown in around a ten-min-

Each member of the audience is led into the unit theatre individually. Some bearded huskie met me at the door, took me into the theatre, tossed me on his back and carried me piggy-back across the stage, back again, up and down a number of steps, set me down on the bare floor in a place I discovered was to be my seat for the evening, took off my coat and asked if I came to see Faust or be Faust. I told him I came to see Faust and he went on about his business as normal -- whatever that may be.

I heard footsteps and a few moans and groans but could not see a thing until the lights went on. They really should not have gone to all the trouble to flip the switch. Edward Albee's definition of the avant garde seems to fit perfectly here: "There is a conceivable breakdown of language and communication and deliberate work of baffling the audience." It really wouldn't have made much difference if the entire show was performed in the dark except I do enjoy knowing where and on what I am sitting and who is next to me and I must admit I was curious to know what sort of creature carried me to this unknown.

The smut was flowing--reeking from every corner of the room. The language con-

ute tale about the man who sells his soul to the devil. They tried too hard, they pushed us too hard and unfortunately smothered themselves and the audience.

The actors went around to each of us individually to tell us it was over-- a good thing really, I wouldn't have known when to have gone home. They invited us to stay and see it over again from the beginning and being a good sport about the whole thing I decided to stay. At this point the see Fausts were separated from the be Fausts. A parachute was dropped from the ceiling upon the group of be Fausts and I waited fifty minutes for something to happen--nothing did. I saw a man get out from under the parachute and asked him what was happening all this time.

"It's the best love-in I've ever been to--and under a parachute - freak out!"

I sat and watched a masked love-in for almost an hour and thought it was part of the show. On the way out I saw a weird-looking guy, who looked like he had a part in all this, in the back of the theatre and asked him what the deal was.

"I don't know, the actors left forty-five minutes ago. I'm supposed to wait till they all leave so I can turn off the lights and go home."



March 27, 1969

TO: Father Colman and Members of the Administrative Council  
FROM: William Van Cleve

April 7, 1969

May I place before you some considerations that appear relevant to judgments you may personally or collectively make regarding the scheduled appearance on campus this Wednesday and Thursday of the Firehouse players to perform two pieces of "living" theater, *EDGE* and *FAUST*? The views briefly discussed here are a result of thinking that antedates the present question; the beliefs expressed are, I hope, in accord with sound American academic tradition. The motive in presenting these thoughts to you now and by memorandum is twofold: (1) The issue posed by the planned visit of this group is complex and as crucial as any for our future development; (2) The time available to decide how to resolve it unfortunately precludes a leisurely and possibly more orthodox and orderly opportunity for concerned members of this community to express their opinions.

Were this a question of whether or not it would be prudent to invite this company to campus this week, I should have voted "Don't!" My decision in that event would have been based first on the presumed injury these performances might cause to our attempt to secure and maintain essential financial support for our campaign from constituents of known views. Second, I would have been unsure about the educational value of performances such as these. Third, I would have questioned whether morally detrimental influences might not have followed in some cases the viewing of these plays. In sum, in so voting I would have argued that the challenge to our longtime image as a Christian college posed by the Firehouse visit at the least required more time for us to appraise carefully these effects and, if necessary, to educate our several constituencies or audiences. This conclusion would have been based on some perception of student-faculty-alumni-trustee attitudes and on slender hearsay evidence concerning the method and content of Firehouse Theater productions.

But this, to the regret of all concerned, is not the question you face. The Firehouse Theater has been invited and has accepted. It plans to come here tomorrow! Radio stations, including our own, have advertised the fact to the community at large. The invitation was issued by students in such the same way that students have invited countless individuals and groups to this campus for some time—without advance administrative approval; I do believe, though, that in this particular case the President was informed beforehand by the students concerned of their plans. So the question is actually whether to rescind the invita-



The earliest document about what happened later at SJU is an April 7 (Easter Monday) 1969 treatise written by Bill Van Cleve

As *The Record* documents later:

The salient aspects of the recent Firehouse Theater controversy are fairly common knowledge, namely, that an *avant-garde* theater group known as the Firehouse Theatre produced a play on campus which contained scenes of male and female nudity. The controversy which surrounded this production has caused serious repercussions both within and without the immediate St. John's community.

The questions of nudity and possible censorship got short shrift from the members of the USG. The debate over the proposal did not show any great awareness of what might result from the play. This naivete was soon rudely shattered.

By the end of Easter vacation it became increasingly apparent to the University that Firehouse was having an impact on alumni and friends beyond anyone's expectations. Accordingly, the Administrative Council of the University met from one to three p.m. on Tuesday, April 8.

Bill Van Cleve was the SJU's Director of Student Affairs from 1967-69 and Director of Counseling & Institutional Research from 1969-70 (and then the Registrar)

**April 7 Monday**

1969 04 07 Memo to Father Colman and Members of the Administrative Council from William Van Cleve, 1969

The Record April 18, 1969, p. 1

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/33845/rec/4>

April 8, 1969

The following is a listing of the series of events concerning the firehouse theatre prior to April 8th, 1969.

The firehouse was originally engaged for a performance in January 1969, which was postponed by the firehouse players, the engagement finally being set for April 8th and 10th. The two performances, *Rags and Faust*, were to be sponsored by the Owl's Head Coffee House and subsidized by the Undergraduate Student Government. The plays were to be put on in the gymnasium and a verbal agreement was made for the use of the gym between Mr. George Durenberger and Zach Trammer, the official representative of the Owl's Head.

The sponsors of the Firehouse followed all the appropriate channels in the University in scheduling the performances. The Administrative Assistant for Academic Affairs, Fr. Eugene, was contacted to secure the gymnasium and to check against conflict with any other events. Mr. Durenberger was contacted. The Lectures and Convocations Committee was contacted through Mr. Van Cleave to secure funds for the Firehouse, for which funds were not available. The Undergraduate Student Government (USG) voted unanimously to appropriate \$250.00 as a loan to subsidize the performances. The Activities Allocation Board (AAB) had earlier voted a \$250.00 grant to the Coffee House to defray the cost of the Firehouse. Fr. Aiden was contacted concerning housing for the members of the Firehouse on the dates mentioned above. Publicity was initiated on the local and metropolitan levels in the various media during Easter vacation and posters were put up on the three local college campuses beginning April 8th.

The actions of the USG and the AAB were recorded in their minutes which are regularly forwarded to the Administrative Offices. Tuesday, April 8th, word reached Zach Trammer, Jim Leitner, the manager of the Coffee House and other interested students and faculty that Fr. Colman wished to meet with everyone responsible for the tentative appearances of the Firehouse. The word was out that pressure was being applied for above to cancel the Firehouse. That afternoon the Administrative Council met from 1PM to 3PM, and several members of the council along with Fr. Colman met with the concerned and responsible students at 4PM. Those present were Zach Trammer, Jim Leitner, Mike Taggeder, Jim McCarthy, Doug Fels, Steve Schunback, Greg Leopold, Pat Ellingsworth, Terry Aronsen, Mike Coy, Steve Humphrey, John Lange, Joe Parry, Fr. Aiden, Fr. Vitus Bucher, Fr. Colman Barry, and Fr. Baldwin Dworschak, Abbot and Chancellor.

Firehouse's two performances, *Rags and Faust*, were to be sponsored by the Owl's Head Coffee House and subsidized by the Undergraduate Student Government.

The appropriate channels had been followed:

- Fr. Eugene in Academic Affairs was contacted to check for scheduling conflicts.
- A verbal agreement was made for the use of the gym with Mr. George Durenberger.
- Housing for the company and publicity were arranged.

document dated  
**April 9 Wednesday**

1969 04 09 A Series of Events Concerning the Firehouse Theatre prior to April 9, 1969

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The sponsors of the Firehouse followed all the appropriate channels in the University in scheduling the performances. The Administrative Assistant for Academic Affairs, Fr. Eugene, was contacted to secure the gymnasium and to check against conflict with any other events. Mr. Durenberger was contacted. The Lectures and Convocations Committee was contacted through Mr. Van Cleve to secure funds for the Firehouse, for which funds were not available. The Undergraduate Student Government (USG) voted unanimously to appropriate \$250.00 as a loan to subsidize the performances. The Activities Allocation Board (AAB) had earlier voted a \$250.00 grant to the Coffee House to defray the cost of the Firehouse. Fr. Aiden was contacted concerning housing for the members of the Firehouse on the dates mentioned above. Publicity was initiated on the local and metropolitan levels in the various media during Easter vacation and posters were put up on the three local college campuses beginning April 8th.

The actions of the USG and the AAB were recorded in their minutes which are regularly forwarded to the Administrative Offices. Tuesday, April 8th, word reached Zach Trammer, Jim Leitner, the manager of the Coffee House and other interested students and faculty that Fr. Colman wished to meet with everyone responsible for the tentative appearances of the Firehouse. The word was out that pressure was being applied for above to cancel the Firehouse. That afternoon the Administrative Council met from 1 PM to 3 PM, and several members of the council along with Fr. Colman met with the concerned and responsible students at 4 PM. Those present were Zach Trammer, Jim Leitner, Mike Taggeder, Jim McCarthy, Doug Fels, Steve Schunback, Greg Leopold, Pat Ellingsworth, Terry Aronsen, Mike Coy, Steve Humphrey, John Lange, Joe Parry, Fr. Aiden, Fr. Vitus Bucher, Fr. Colman Barry, and Fr. Baldwin Dworschak, Abbot and Chancellor.

*didn't receive*

### On Tuesday, April 8:

Word reached...interested students and faculty that Fr. Colman wished to meet with everyone responsible for the tentative appearances of the Firehouse.

The word was out that pressure was being applied to cancel the Firehouse.

That afternoon the Administrative Council met from 1 PM to 3 PM, and several members, along with Fr. Colman, met with the concerned and responsible students at 4 PM.

document dated  
**April 9 Wednesday**

1969 04 09 A Series of Events Concerning the Firehouse Theatre prior to April 9, 1969

April 8, 1969

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- During the discussion, the following points came to light:
1. Fr. Colman stated that he felt that the proper channels were not used or he would have known of the performance ahead of time.
  2. The students stated as demonstrated above that they employed all the channels of which they were aware.
  3. Fr. Colman and Fr. Abbott commented that they had received calls from members of the lay board of trustees and some "concerned friends of St. John's" who were upset (to put it mildly) that they would allow the Firehouse at St. John's.
  4. Then came to light that the objections were based upon 3rd and 4th hand information and even then the actual objectives were not stated.
  5. While Fr. Colman's objectives were that the persons responsible had not followed the proper channels and that presentations were not being incorporated into an academic program, the objections from outside the University proper were as follows:
    - a. The appearance of the Firehouse at this time could endanger the capital funds drive of the University.
    - b. The nature of the Firehouse presentations would directly conflict with the prevailing views of the local community.
    - c. The image and name of St. John's would be directly endangered by the appearance of the Firehouse at this time.
    - d. Swifly in the theatre had not appeared on any other campus in the state.
    - e. That the holding of these performances at this time would endanger future appropriations by the legislature to the Minnesota Fine Arts Commission and through them to the Firehouse.
    - f. That these performances may precipitate resignations from the lay board of trustees and the faculty.

for above to cancel the Firehouse. That afternoon the Administrative Council met from 1PM to 3PM, and several members of the council along with Fr. Colman met with the concerned and responsible students at 4PM. Those present were Zach Tremmer, Jim Leitner, Mike Taggeder, Jim McCarthy, Doug Fels, Steve Schunback, Greg Leopold, Pat Ellingsworth, Terry Aronsen, Mike Coy, Steve Humphrey, John Lange, Joe Parry, Fr. Aiden, Fr. Vitus Bucher, Fr. Colman Barry, and fr. Baldwin Dworschak, Abbott and Chancellor.

Fr. Colman felt proper channels were not used.

Trustees and "concerned friends of St. John's...were upset (to put it mildly)..."

The appearance:

- could endanger the capital funds drive
- would conflict with prevailing views of the local community
- would damage St. John's image
- would endanger future appropriations by the legislature to the MN Fine Arts Commission
- might precipitate resignations by trustees and faculty

document dated  
**April 9 Wednesday**

1969 04 09 A Series of Events Concerning the Firehouse Theatre prior to April 9, 1969

April 8, 1969

The following is a listing of the series of events concerning the firehouse theatre prior to April 9th, 1969.

6. Faced with these possible results, the students concerned tried to offer a series of compromises designed to alleviate each of these possible adverse effects and still to have the performances. These positive proposals were:

- a. That statements would be released to the various media disassociating St. John's University from the presentations and clarifying who was responsible and advertising a proposed series of lectures and discussions.
- b. That a series of lectures and discussions would be given by members of the theatre department of the College of St. Benedict and members of the Firehouse company, both before and after the play.
- c. That the audience would be restricted to the students and faculty of St. John's, St. Ben's, and St. Cloud State and special guests of the Administrations of the three schools.
- d. That special coverage of the entire situation could be employed via the Record and Off Campus Record.
- e. That the Firehouse would be asked to perform plays without nudity since they had done so in the past.

Publicity was initiated on the dates mentioned above. Publicity was initiated on the local and metropolitan levels in the various media during Easter vacation and posters were put up on the three local college campuses beginning April 8th.

The actions of the USG and the AAB were recorded in their minutes which are regularly forwarded to the Administrative Offices. Tuesday, April 8th, word reached Zach Trammer, Jim Leitner, the manager of the Coffee House and other interested students and faculty that Fr. Colman wished to meet with everyone responsible for the tentative appearances of the Firehouse. The word was out that pressure was being applied for above to cancel the Firehouse. That afternoon the Administrative Council met from 1PM to 3PM, and several members of the council along with Fr. Colman met with the concerned and responsible students at 4PM. Those present were Zach Trammer, Jim Leitner, Mike Taggeder, Jim McCarthy, Doug Fels, Steve Schunback, Greg Leopold, Pat Ellingsworth, Terry Aronsen, Mike Coy, Steve Humphrey, John Lange, Joe Parry, Fr. Aiden, Fr. Vitus Bucher, Fr. Colman Barry, and fr. Baldwin Dworschak, Abbot and Chancellor.

The students offered positive proposals:

- statements would be released to the media disassociating SJU and clarifying who was responsible
- the Theater department and the acting company would hold lectures and discussions
- the audience would be restricted to SJU, CSB, and SCSU members
- Firehouse would be asked to perform one of the plays without nudity

document dated  
**April 9 Wednesday**

1969 04 09 A Series of Events Concerning the Firehouse Theatre prior to April 9, 1969

April 8, 1969

The following is a listing of the series of events concerning the Firehouse Theatre prior to April 9th, 1969. The Firehouse was originally engaged for a performance in January 1969, which was postponed by the Firehouse players, the engagement finally being set for April 9th and 10th. The two performances, Anna and Faust, were to be sponsored by the Ouls and Coffee House and subsidized by the undergraduate student government. The plays were to be

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Though the negotiations had dragged on for three hours, though the responsibility and integrity of the students involved had been tested and found sound, time and again, and though there was no question of the sincere concern for the greater well being of the University, it finally became apparent that the only compromise that was really acceptable to Fr. Coleman (and though him the lay board, alumni, and friends) was cancellation of the Firehouse. It must be emphasized that the pressures upon him by the "financial backers" of the university were what led him to this decision. Though he was not prepared to ban the Firehouse, he did use every bit of political and personal pressure to this end. The students were placed in the powerless position of accepting "total" responsibility for all consequences of going on with the show. Neither faculty members nor administrators were willing to admit or accept any part of the responsibility. Though the students denied that they would be or should be held "totally" responsible, they know that "the powers that be" could make it so. Consequently the students accepted cancellation of the performances in exchange for a guarantee that the Firehouse would be back in the Fall as part of a Theatre perspective week, that the \$500.00 penalty clause for breaking contract would be taken care of by Fr. Colman. It was agreed that the students would release a "face saving" statement so that no one would think that anyone had been "bought off". This was the state of affairs as of 9PM Tuesday, April 8th. Any statements of fact or opinion in the above are subject to correction and interpretation by those mentioned. The record of the meeting between the students and administrators can be checked against reporting the minutes kept by Dr. Joseph Farry. Every attempt was made to be honest and objective.

The negotiations dragged on for three hours...

It became apparent that the only compromise acceptable to Fr. Colman (and the board, alumni and friends) was cancellation.

The students were placed in the position of accepting "total" responsibility for all consequences.

The students accepted cancellation of the performances in exchange for a guarantee that Firehouse would be back in the fall as part of a Theatre perspective week, and that the \$500 penalty for breaking the contract would be taken care of by Fr. Colman.

document dated  
**April 9 Wednesday**

1969 04 09 A Series of Events Concerning the Firehouse Theatre prior to April 9, 1969





To Prevent Violence

No. 44  
Apr. 69 St. Cl. Visitor  
**Theatre Group Performs Nude Scenes**

*Ed. Note: The events in the following news story happened just as our last week's edition came out. Since then, the story has received wide coverage in the local and national news media. The following is a round-up of the story as reported by National Catholic News Service.*

**COLLEGEVILLE, Minn.**—A controversial play containing nude scenes was performed at St. John's University here by a theatrical group accused of "trespassing on our campus."

The group was allowed to give its performance, however, "in order to prevent the possibility of any violence on our campus."

Two Firehouse Theater performances were halted earlier by the college administration because of the alleged nude scenes in both plays, "Rags" and "Faust"

"Rags" never was performed, but students and faculty voted to allow the performance of "Faust". And the nude scenes were left intact, a university spokesman said.

Abbot Baldwin Dworschak, O.S.B., of St. John's Abbey, which operates the university, issued a statement just two hours before "Faust" was per-

formed (April 10).

"The Firehouse Theater group is appearing on St. John's campus this evening without any official endorsement of St. John's Abbey, the university faculty or students of this institution," Abbot Dworschak pointed out.

"It is our view that this group of players is trespassing on our campus," he declared. "They are appearing here despite the fact that no contractual agreement exists between them and any responsible individual on this campus."

"We have regretfully permitted the players to perform this evening in order to prevent the possibility of any violence on our campus," the abbot said.

"Emotions have run extremely high among our students," he explained. "Many have urged that the performance be permitted because of what they conscientiously believe to be matter of academic freedom. Many others share the view of the abbey and university administration that the performance violates what we in the Christian community consider as acceptable and decent standards of conduct and deportment. We make no judg-

ment as to the artistic or esthetic value of this performance.

"We are concerned here exclusively with maintaining and nourishing the Christian ideals and principles for which this institution has stood for well over a century," Abbot Dworschak said.

"I wish to state categorically that we do not approve of this performance," he declared. "We have permitted it to take place only because we wish above all to prevent physical violence on this campus."

"Like any human organization some of our procedures are faulty," he said. "Our lines of communications with the students break down in rare instances. We intend to correct this situation promptly and to clarify in a most explicit way for our students and their parents that St. John's—as a liberal arts college in a Christian context—will remain precisely that."

"We do not intend to compromise nor to permit on this campus theatrical performances or other activities which are offensive to the large majority of this community," the abbot said.

Despite the abbot's strongly-

worded statement, it is likely that the Firehouse Theater will come back to St. John's campus, according to the university's public relations office. But its return would be on an academic basis, it was explained.

The theater group would participate in classes that would offer regular classroom discussion of plays. The classes would offer credit, it was reported.

When Father Colman Barry, university president, earlier postponed both performances, he said the postponement was made because students had not gone through proper institutional channels.

"We heard about it only last week," Father Barry said (April 9), "and it has caused quite an uproar among the trustees, faculty and students. We decided this wasn't the proper context for an artistic performance."

"We want an academic dialogue," he continued. "We want the performances analyzed and discussed with people from drama departments. We've decided to postpone the performance and ask the Firehouse back later in the year for a series of theater perspective seminars."

In *The St. Cloud Visitor*:

The National Catholic News Service weighs in a week later.

The play "Faust"  
DID go on -

"in order to prevent the possibility of any violence on our campus."

April 17(?)

1969 04 St. Cloud Visitor Theatre Group Performs Nude Scenes

STATEMENT BY ABBOT BALDWIN DWORSCHAK, O.S.B.

4/10/69 P.M.

The Firehouse Theater group is appearing on the Saint John's campus this evening without any official endorsement of Saint John's Abbey, the University faculty or students of this institution.

It is our view that this group of players is trespassing on our campus. They are appearing here despite the fact that no contractual agreement exists between them and any responsible individual on this campus.

We have regretfully permitted the players to perform this evening in order to prevent the possibility of violence on our campus. Emotions have run extremely high among our students. Many have urged that the performance be permitted because of what they conscientiously believe to be a matter of academic freedom. Many others share the view of the Abbey and University administration that the performance violates what we in this Christian community consider as acceptable and decent standards of conduct and deportment.

Statement by Abbot Baldwin

1969 Sagatagan



April 10 Thursday

1969 04 10 Statement by Abbot Baldwin Dworschak, Firehouse Theatre, 1969 April 10

STATEMENT BY ABBOT BALDWIN DWORSCHAK, O.S.B.

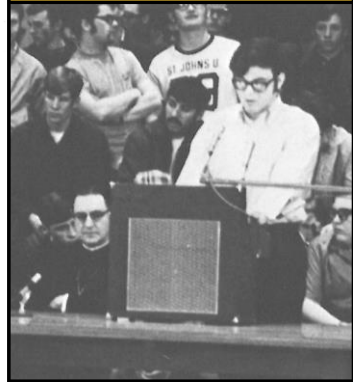
4/10/69 P.M.

We make no judgment as to the artistic or aesthetic value of this performance. We are concerned here exclusively with maintaining and nourishing the Christian ideals and principles for which this institution has stood for well over a century.

I wish to state categorically that we do not approve of this performance. We have permitted it to take place only because we wish above all to prevent physical violence on this campus.

Like any human organization, some of our procedures are faulty. Our lines of communication with the students break down in rare instances. We intend to correct this situation promptly and to clarify in a most explicit way for our students and their parents that Saint John's -- as a liberal arts college in a Christian context -- will remain precisely that. We do not intend to compromise our principles nor to permit on this campus theatrical performances or other activities which are offensive to the large majority of this community.

Statement by Abbot Baldwin



April 10 Thursday

1969 04 10 Statement by Abbot Baldwin Dworschak, Firehouse Theatre, 1969 April 10



# The Record

Student Newspaper of St. John's University

Volume 82

Collegeville, Minnesota 56322, Friday, April 18, 1969

Number 4



QUO VADIS?

## Firehouse Disrupts SJU; Students Seize Initiative

The action aspects of the recent firehouse disruption, according to the Student Government, have not been completely resolved. The disruption, which was held on the night of the firehouse, was a protest against the firehouse's role in the community. The disruption was held on the night of the firehouse, and the firehouse was disrupted for several hours. The disruption was held on the night of the firehouse, and the firehouse was disrupted for several hours.

## Campus Propose Grade Change

The Student Government of St. John's University has proposed a change in the grading system. The proposal is to change the grading system from a letter grade system to a numerical grade system. The proposal is to change the grading system from a letter grade system to a numerical grade system. The proposal is to change the grading system from a letter grade system to a numerical grade system.

## 'Spring Fling' Has Possibility Of Being Best 'Day' Ever at SJU

A new tradition is being planned for the spring semester at St. John's University. The event is called the "Spring Fling" and is expected to be the best "day" ever at SJU. The event is called the "Spring Fling" and is expected to be the best "day" ever at SJU. The event is called the "Spring Fling" and is expected to be the best "day" ever at SJU.

## Spring Formal Set for May 3; Music By Raymond Vibrato

The Spring Formal is set for May 3, 1969, at the St. John's University. The event will feature music by Raymond Vibrato. The Spring Formal is set for May 3, 1969, at the St. John's University. The event will feature music by Raymond Vibrato.

The Record wasn't a weekly then, and wasn't published between March 21 and April 18 (because of Easter/spring break) – but it documented things after they happened.

A discussion was then arranged for Thursday at one p.m. in the Great Hall at which time the entire student body was to express their opinion. Fr. Abbot, Fr. Colman and members of the Administrative Council were all present to talk to the students.



**April 10 Thursday**

Photos: 1969 *Sagatagan* yearbook, p. 150

The Record April 18, 1969, p. 3

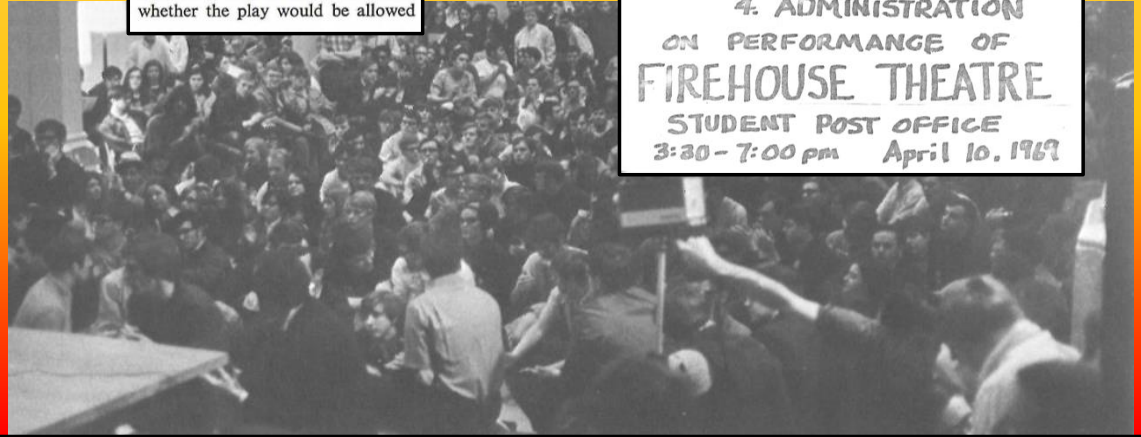
<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/33847/rec/4>

Photos: 1969 *Sagatagan* yearbook, p. 150

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/48989/rec/51>

A discussion was then arranged for Thursday at one p.m. in the Great Hall at which time the entire student body was to express their opinion. Fr. Abbot, Fr. Colman and members of the Administrative Council were all present to talk to the students. The end result of this meeting was that the students demanded a vote be taken to decide whether the play would be allowed

REFERENDUM  
of  
1. STUDENTS  
2. FACULTY  
3. MONASTERY  
4. ADMINISTRATION  
ON PERFORMANCE OF  
FIREHOUSE THEATRE  
STUDENT POST OFFICE  
3:30 - 7:00 pm April 10, 1969



The Record April 18, 1969, p. 3

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/33847/rec/4>

Photos: 1969 Sagatagan yearbook, p. 150

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/48989/rec/51>

1969 04 10 Referendum in SJU Archives

Vote results:

YES: 514  
NO: 400  
Other: 40

### Firehouse Students

The salient aspects of Firehouse Theater center fairly common knowledge that an avant-garde theater known as the Firehouse produced a play on campus contained scenes of male nudity. The controversy surrounded this production has serious repercussions both with and without the immediate community.

The events which led to Firehouse's coming on campus tend at least as far back as At that time Zach Tranner, mathematics major, approached the Activities Allocations Board of the now defunct 1968-69 Council for financial support to bring the Firehouse to campus.

Tranner had already secured Mr. Van Cleve of the Council Committee and had received but not monetary support from Dan Whalen, chairman of AAB at the time, the Board assured by Tranner that the production probably not be part of the house's production. Despite some reservations the AAB made a

formed man, you attack individuals, not a team, and if you don't have the courage or qualities to sign your name to your opinions you aren't as good a man as any of the 18 hockey players you criticize.

Phil Wetzel '72

### FIREHOUSE - - - Continued from page 1

and stage *Rags* there Wednesday night. This attempt failed.

A discussion was then arranged for Thursday at one p.m. in the Great Hall at which time the entire student body was to express their opinion. Fr. Abbot, Fr. Colman and members of the Administrative Council were all present to talk to the students. The end result of this meeting was that the students demanded a vote be taken to decide whether the play would be allowed

see on the campus by these margins. Hanish and Haskins, both more accustomed to catching passes for Gag's football team than votes, were joined by three others, Denny Scherer, Jim McCarthy, and Mike Murphy. Murphy, a freshman, had pre-

Five hundred and fourteen students and faculty voted YES, the play should go on. Four hundred voted NO, and 40 students voted OTHER.

A little attempt was made by Fr. Abbot to stop the show anyway, but there was little that could be done by him alone, at that time. Convinced of this, Fr. Abbot reluctantly did nothing. Fr. Colman could not be reached for comment at that time.

### Attempt to Complete Education

consider education to be a total personal growth within the personalistic atmosphere of a Christian living

not included in our academic experience.

The proposal itself suggests that



CONFRONTATION OR COMPROMISE?

The Record April 18, 1969, p. 1

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/33845/rec/4>

and p. 3 <http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/33847/rec/4>

## St. John's Permits Nude Play 'to Prevent Physical Violence'

COLLEGEVILLE, Minn. — A play containing nude scenes was performed at St. John's University in Collegeville Thursday night, although the university chancellor said in a statement that the performers were "trespassing" and that the performance was being "regretfully allowed in order to prevent the possibility of physical violence."

Abbot Baldwin Dworschak said the play violates what the administration and the "Christian college community" at St. John's consider "acceptable and decent standards."

The performance of "Faust" was presented in the gymnasium after a student-faculty vote that the play be allowed on campus.

**THE VOTE**, arranged and conducted in two hours after a debate attended by 600 students in the university's Great Hall, was 514 to 420.

Participating in the debate were the university president, the Rev. Colman Barry; Dr. Joseph Farry, a professor of government; Karen Garvin, a teacher in the Theater Department; and James McCarthy, a student who is the nephew of Sen. Eugene McCarthy, D-Minn.

Terry Aronson, student council president who moderated the debate, said last night that the university "had not sanctioned" the performance, but "they're letting it go on."

Yesterday, when it appeared that the performance by the Firehouse Theater would not be allowed on campus, last night, arrangements were made to hold the play at the Lakeview Ballroom in Avon, about 4 miles from the campus.

**THIS arrangement** fell apart when the ballroom manager told student leaders he had to attend a funeral

and would not be able to have the play there.

Yesterday's debate was arranged after the administration had decided to postpone and possibly cancel "Faust" and "Rags," both of which contain nude scenes.

Father Barry had told students that the postponement was ordered because they hadn't gone through proper institutional channels in arranging for the plays.

David O'Fallon, an instructor of theater arts at nearby St. Benedict's, a woman's college, contended that St. John's, which is conducting a \$3.5 million fund drive, "backed out due to pressure from trustees."

Aronson said last night that the debate and vote had been arranged "to prevent a confrontation with the administration, which is the last thing we want."

He described the debate as "a quite rational discussion."



Minneapolis Tribune April 11, 1969

1969 Sagatagan

1969 04 11 St. John's Permits Nude Play to Prevent Physical Violence, Mpls Trib  
 Photo: 1969 Sagatagan yearbook, p. 150  
<http://cdm.csbju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/48989/rec/51>



78-33 Apr. '69  
**No Discipline Expected  
For Nude Play Planners**

Pioneer Press News Service  
COLLEGEVILLE — No disciplinary action is planned against students who sponsored presentation of a play at St. John's University over objections of the administration, according to the assistant to the president.

Donald Conway said the students did not violate any university rule, since presen-

tion of events not directly sponsored by the school is allowed on the campus.

The performance of "Faust" by the Firehouse Theater of Minneapolis Thursday drew a critical statement from Abbot Baldwin Dworschak, O.S.B., head of St. John's Abbey and university chancellor, who said the theater group "is, in our

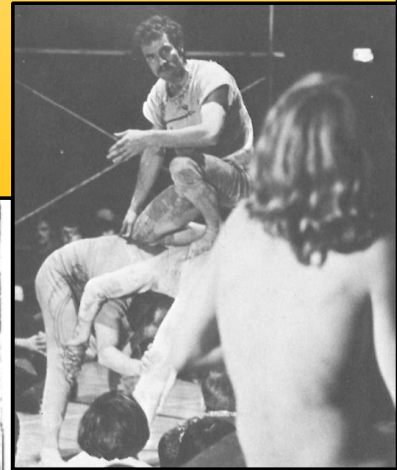
view, trespassing on our campus."

Conway said the main objection was to "nudity on the stage," which he said is "hardly appropriate" for the home of a religious community and a Catholic college.

There are ample opportunities for presentation of a variety of plays and other cultural events at the college, Conway said, and the administration suggested that "Faust" be presented in an academic context as part of a symposium of contemporary theater.

St. Paul Pioneer Press

Conway said a small group of students brought the play to the campus.  
Mike Tegeder, a junior from Minneapolis and a member of that group, said the performance was planned for the advancement of students, not as a protest.  
He said the students had postponed the presentation once, partly because of the objections raised, but scheduled it for Thursday when they found the Firehouse group would not be available after that to present the play at St. John's.  
The student group probably will issue a statement later in reply to the university's criticism for the play as offensive and immoral, Tegeder said. He noted that he did not feel the presentation was inappropriate.



That's a no-no.

1969 04 Pioneer Press "No Discipline Expected..."



## *Cracks in the Sidewalk*

by Spikes

It's been awhile since I last took the time to jot down a few of my perverted thoughts for this column. I realize that too much has been said about the Firehouse Theatre episode and I know I should let it die, but I must make a few observations. My apologies for my tardiness.

As far as the whole mess is concerned, I think all of us have witnessed a living example of how pussycats have a way of turning into tigers with the aid of the right people. My interpretation of the affair:

First of all, Firehouse asks may we please come and show our bods?

Fearless Leader says yes, please do.

Then the boys with the coin threaten to pick up their balls and bats and go home if Sunny St. Jack's allows a skin show to proceed as planned cuz *they* never got to see stuff like that—*they* had to be content with their dirty jokes and pre-*Playboy* magazines.

Fearless Leader says no.

Then the Liberated Kids get together and decide that if gunkies from other colleges do it then *they* better do it, too, cuz what would SDS say about SJU if there wouldn't be any demonstrations and other groovy stuff like that here—except that the SJU Liberated Kids don't know exactly how to react. They could follow the example of their peers from Columbia, Berkeley, Harvard, Cornell, etc., and turn the campus into a war zone. Instead, they call for a general meeting of the community. Non-violent. I repeat, non-violent.

The press and other big mouths love it—a chance for a really big story right here in central Minnesota. “Now we can catch up with the big guys.”

Debate from both sides at the general meeting.

Trusted Trustee says we love you.

Fearless Leader says no, then maybe, then what the hell! Let's vote on it.

The majority says yes.

Fearless Leader says nothing and blushes.

Spiritual Leader gets into the act and says no, but in order to prevent violence the show must go on. *Hunky Dorey. And Pontius Pilate, in order to prevent violence, washed his hands and delivered Jesus into the hands of the crowd to be crucified.* Nice reasoning.

The show goes on, almost incidentally.

Trusted Trustee and friends grab their bags of gold and retire to their respective vaults. The school is penniless.

The *Record* editorial staff and other Goldwaterites point accusing fingers at the Liberated Kids.

Fearless Leader, the individual who could have settled the entire matter early in the campaign with a simple, meaningful yes or no and handled the alumni and students with his usual aplomb, sits in his office and blushes.

And the beat goes on.

April 30

*The Record*, p.2

...1969-04-30, The Record, p.2

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/33905/rec/40>

The Theology Department weighs in:

*Theatre* 5

DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY SAINT JOHN'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGEVILLE MINNESOTA 56321

May 9, 1969

MEMO TO:

The Chancellor of Saint John's University,  
Abbot Baldwin Dworschak, O.S.B.  
The members of the Board of Trustees,  
Saint John's University  
The College of Saint Benedict  
The President of Saint John's University,  
Father Colman J. Barry, O.S.B.  
The President of The College of Saint Benedict,  
Dr. Stanley J. Idzerda  
The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences of Saint John's University,  
Father Hilary D. Thimmesch, O.S.B.  
The Dean of The College of Saint Benedict,  
Sister Firmin Escher, O.S.B.  
The Dean of The School of Divinity of Saint John's University,  
Father Vitus E. Bucher, O.S.B.  
The Dean of The Graduate School of Theology of Saint John's University,  
Father Aelred H. Tegels, O.S.B.  
Mother Henrita Osendorf, O.S.B.

CONCERNING:  
Moral issues raised by the Firehouse Theatre's play presented at Saint John's  
University.

FROM:  
The Chairman of the Department of Theology of Saint John's University and The College  
of Saint Benedict, Father Michael Paulin Blecker, O.S.B.

May 9

1969 05 09 Theology Dept. Memo about Firehouse Theatre's play, May 9 1969 –  
written by the chair, Fr. Michael Blecker (who became SJU's president two years later)

The Theology Department weighs in:

CONCERNING:

Moral issues raised by the Firehouse Theatre's play presented at Saint John's University.

FROM:

The Chairman of the Department of Theology of Saint John's University and The College of Saint Benedict, Father Michael Paulin Blecker, O.S.B.

The members of the Theology Department of Saint John's University and The College of Saint Benedict in the business meeting of May 7, 1969, voted 11 to 3 that the following statement be distributed to the administrations of Saint John's University and The College of Saint Benedict. In accordance, therefore, with the directive of the faculty of the Department of Theology the following statement is proposed for your consideration:

INTRODUCTION

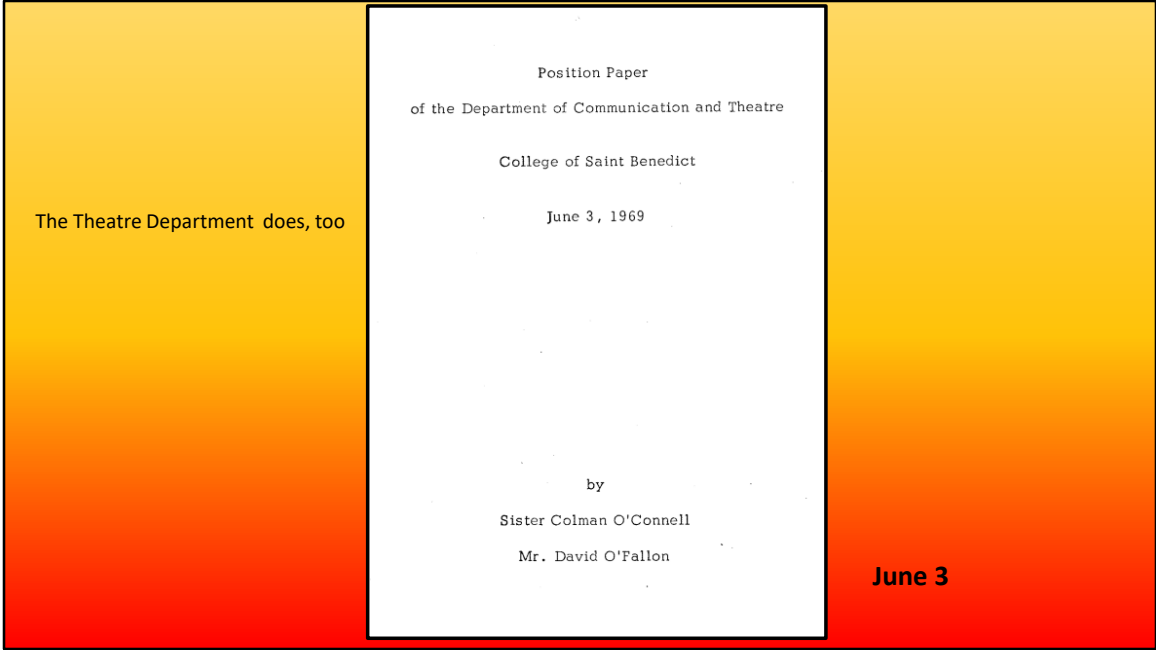
Concrete moral decisions are seldom simple. In order to help in the evaluation of recent events on campus the theology faculty proposes the following principles.

PRINCIPLES

1. Nudity on stage is not per se unchristian.
2. The understanding of the body is important for the understanding of man. Theatre, just as other arts, can be helpful in this task.
3. A christian college or university should be open even to controversial forms of expression.
4. There are forms of expression, particularly in entertainment, which a christian college or university can be open to only with severe restrictions (e.g., by presentation only in a true academic context) or not at all. An example would be a blackface minstrel show.
5. A concern for the financial integrity and the community acceptance of a university is a true moral obligation.
6. There are times when a university must be willing to jeopardize its finances or its community acceptance, but only to safeguard a value of proportionate gravity.

May 9

1969 05 09 Theology Dept. Memo about Firehouse Theatre's play, May 9 1969



1969 06 03 Position Paper of the Department of Communication and Theatre, June 3 1969

## Firehouse Restokes After Tour 'Confrontations'

If you haven't heard much from the Firehouse Theater people the past couple of months, it's because they haven't been in town for a couple of months.

But they've back now after 15 performances at 13 theaters in four states, and they seem relieved that they weren't arrested and happy that none of their performances were canceled, though a few times perilously close.

Their first stop was

Notre Dame University in South Bend, Ind., a bastion of conservative Catholic education. They were part of an arts festival, but their reputations preceded them and the dean of students asked them not to perform, mainly since the company's production of "Faust" contains a nude scene.

**BUT STUDENTS** rallied and threatened a confrontation so the administration capitulated, providing the audience was warned

about the play's content beforehand and the press was kept out of the performance.

No censorship, provided no one knows the play was put on. But 250 showed up anyway and Athletic Director Sydney Walter considered it a highlight of the tour.

Following that was a performance at the Philadelphia College of Art, then a 10-day stint at the Cafe La Mama in New York City's West Village.

Opinion there, to say the least, was polarized.

ON OPENING night, playwright Rochelle Owens ("Fuz") criticized the play and at one point, during the audience confrontation portion that's part of all Firehouse plays, she even screamed, "They're going to get me."

Several people left early and the Village Voice critic mercilessly panned the show for being "middle class," which will certainly

come as a shock to the middle class.

But many came to the Firehouse's defense, including French playwright Armand, who was in New York for the premieres of two of his works. He called it "The best theater I've ever seen" and instructed a woman to get a story on the theater for his theater magazine.

**THEN CAME** three performances at the Performance Garage in New York, home of the Performance

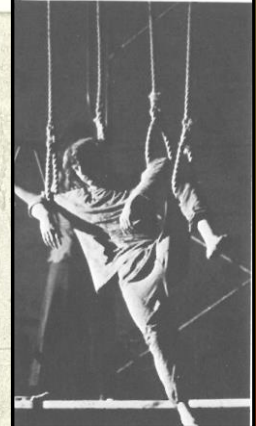
Union until two actors confronted her and the audience finally told her to be quiet.

The company, after looking at new audiences and playing in different spaces, has made a great many changes in "Faust," which they'll be playing locally for five more weeks, Friday through Sunday at 8 p.m. A half hour has been cut from the work since it opened, for instance.

**BEGINNING** July 16, the company will go to the Brandeis University international theater festival for several performances. Then the company hopes to come up with another new play. The best possibility right now is a new rendition of "The Tempest."

Another plan in the back of their minds is a weekend music theater. The performance would run two days and the audience would stay overnight. They'd like to find a camp outside the city to do it in. "We haven't worked out all the problems of that one yet," smiled Walter, not at all displeased with the possibility.

All this was a matter of hang-ups.



June 1

MARLOW HOTCHKISS IN A SCENE FROM "FAUST"  
Firehouse Theater people are back in town.

### Firehouse Theater goes on tour

The Dean at Notre Dame asks them not to perform.

Students rally and threaten a confrontation.

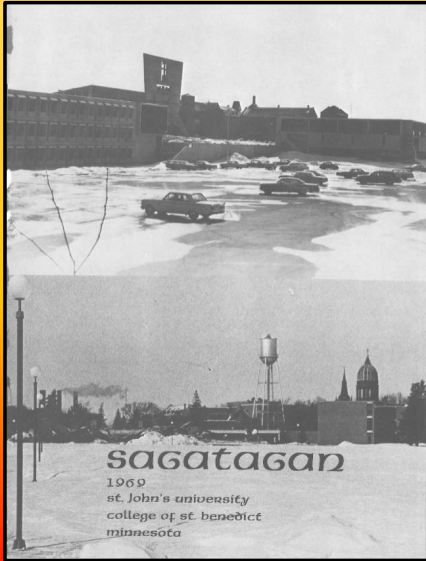
The Administration capitulated, provided that:

- the audience is warned and
- the press is kept out

1969 06 01 Firehouse Restokes After Tour 'Confrontations'- The Minneapolis Tribune, 1969

Photo: 1969 Sagatagan yearbook, p. 151

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/48990/rec/51>



Maybe the performance by the Firehouse Theater Company at St. John's did offend parents, alumni and trustees. Maybe it did represent a blunt disregard of the traditional Christian values of the school. Maybe it did show a lack of concern for the image of the institution. Maybe it did affect the development of students who were not mature enough to understand the play. And even maybe it was not brought to campus through the right channels.

Just a few months before, in the fall, the same group performed a similar play at St. Ben's and, although the proper protests, disappointments and disapprovals filed in fol-

lowing the performance, little is known of any major consequences it may have had.

What made the difference? Simple. The issue at stake was not the play itself anymore: it had become a struggle for power. The fight was to find out just who determines which events are permissible for the students to bring to campus and participate in, and which are not.

The trustees had to prove that the support they give to the school buys some control over it. The alumni had to remind us that this place is not anymore the good ol' St. John's they learned to respect. The parents had to defend

...and the yearbook sums it all up

the values they believe in and live by. The administration had to defend its official procedures and channels. And the students had to assert their independence.

All of them did their own thing, but in the wrong way. The trustees, alumni and parents did wrong in choosing imposition, as if they were dealing with children; the administration in failing to demonstrate the validity and strength of their position; the students in rushing the events and endorsing the performance in an emotionally ill atmosphere.

The problem was not with the issue itself, but with its handling.

p. 150-151

Image: 1969 Sagatagan yearbook, p. 1

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/48840/rec/51>

1969 Sagatagan yearbook, p. 150

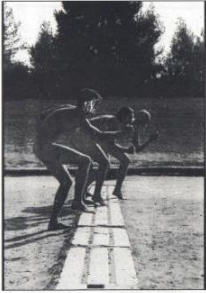
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1969 Sagatagan yearbook, p. 151

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Standards change!



Complete the college experience with a trip abroad. You too can agin from cultural moments like this one.

*Visit the International Studies office and say, "I want to get naked somewhere else!"*

"The Inebriated" May 17, 1998

"The Retort" May 12, 1997



Students protest signs which have caused a campus disruption. (photo by A. Ngry)

"The Inebriated" May 17, 1998 p. 3

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/38920/rec/21>

"The Retort" May 12, 1997, p. 1

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/39058/rec/20>

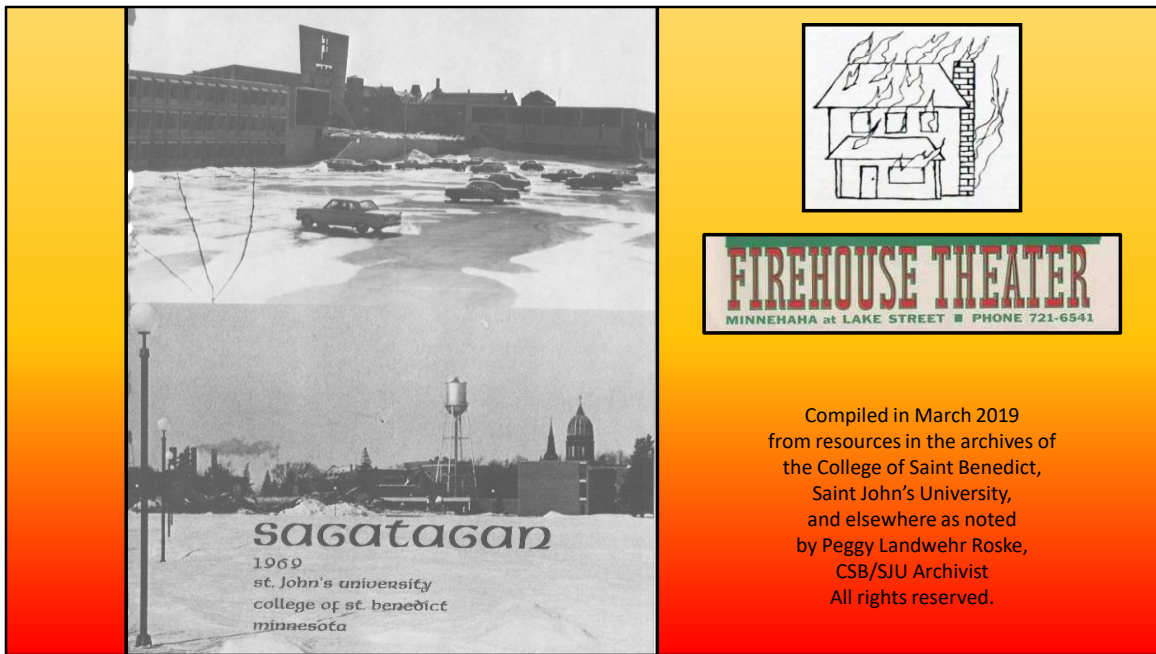


Photo: 1969 Sagatagan yearbook, p. 1

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/48840/rec/51>

Drawing: 1968 10 29 The Torch p.2

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