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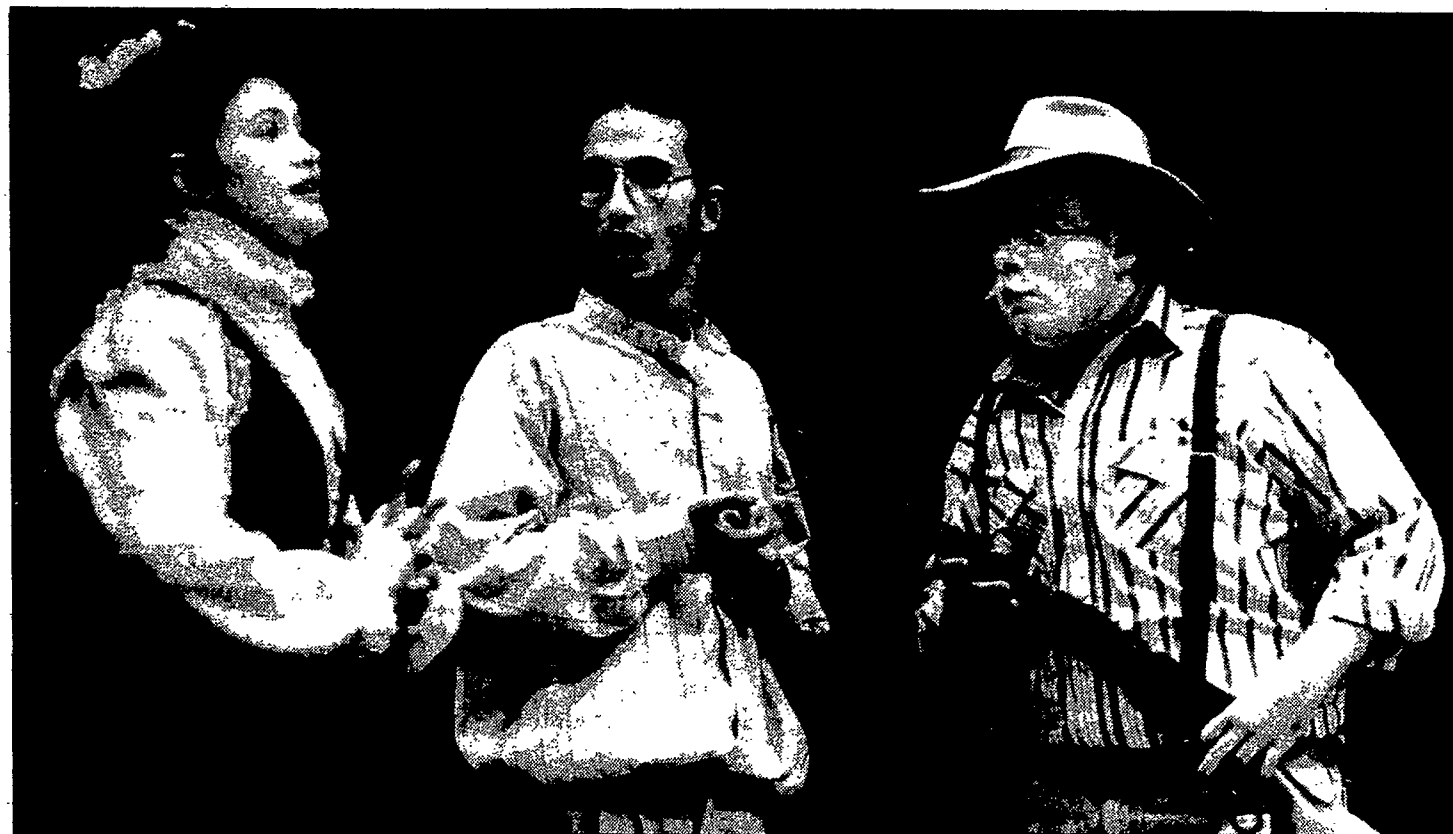
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S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer



'Oklahoma!' hits stage at Mercy

The Mercy/McQuaid Players, a group of students and recent alumni from Our Lady of Mercy and McQuaid Jesuit high schools, staged the musical *Oklahoma!* at the Mercy High auditorium last week. (Above left) J.J. Rutt plays Ado Annie, Micah Smyth is Ali Hakim and Jim Mannix portrays Andrew Carnes during an opening-night performance July 14. (Left) Curly, played by Mike Providence, woos Laurey, portrayed by Anne Kidera. The Mercy/McQuaid Players are under the artistic direction of Bob Smyth and supported by parents and administrations from Mercy and McQuaid. They performed their first summer theater production last year, when they presented *South Pacific*.

Teachers not rehired; parents upset, baffled

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

CANANDAIGUA — The decision not to rehire six teachers at St. Mary's School has outraged many school parents and led the school committee's chairwoman to speculate that the school may close.

An ad hoc committee of the parish council met to discuss the teachers' issue on Sunday night, July 17. Rich Colosi, parish council chairman, said the committee had prepared a statement that would appear in the parish bulletin the weekend of July 23-24.

A month earlier, on June 17, six teachers had been informed that their contracts would not be renewed for the upcoming year, according to Laurie J. Frykholm, St. Mary's principal. Frykholm confirmed that five of the teachers taught classes in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, third, fourth and sixth grades.

A part-time art instructor also was not rehired, Frykholm said, adding that the school is interviewing candidates to replace the former employees.

When asked why the teachers were not rehired, Timothy Dwyer, diocesan superintendent of schools, replied: "Basically, we had a dysfunctional faculty that did not jell well together."

At least two of the six former teachers had not been aware of any such problems. Both teachers asked not to be identified at this time.

One former instructor complained that she had received no warning that she might not be rehired, and that no explanation was offered on June 17 by Frykholm or by the two diocesan officials present when she learned she was going to be let go.

Sister Virginia Steinwachs, SSJ, diocesan

assistant superintendent of human resources, and Sister Margaret Mancuso, SSJ, assistant superintendent for instruction and staff development, were present at the meetings with the teachers.

Both teachers speculated that they were not rehired because former principal Sister Alice Marie Kurtz, SSJ, saw the six faculty members as threats to her control of the school. Sister Kurtz left her position last winter, and both teachers believed the former principal had led the diocese to agree that the staff shakeup was necessary.

"Sister Kurtz kind of pitted people against each other," one of the teachers said. "She kind of painted a picture that this was a totally uncooperative faculty."

The other teacher said faculty meetings during Sister Kurtz's years at the school emphasized faculty cohesion more than student education. Dissent was frowned upon, and conformity was considered a primary value in a teacher, she claimed.

The former teacher said she felt Frykholm, principal since January, was continuing Sister Kurtz's philosophy.

When contacted by the *Catholic Courier*, Sister Kurtz, who is currently on sabbatical in Minnesota, declined to respond to any questions about the controversy.

Both Dwyer and Frykholm also declined to comment specifically on the reasons the six teachers were not rehired. Dwyer noted that "legal, ethical and moral reasons" prohibited him from commenting further.

The decision not to rehire the six teachers has left school parents baffled and angry. The school committee's chairwoman summed up the feelings of

many parents: "It has destroyed the morale of the parents," commented Jean Jesserer Smith. "There is a smoldering resentment of this."

Smith said she had heard of possible faculty cuts earlier this year, and learned from Frykholm on May 23 that three teachers were going to lose their jobs. Still, Smith noted that she did not mention the possible cuts to any of the teachers because she did not want to "engage in gossip."

Despite her foreknowledge of possible cuts, Smith said she was stunned when six teachers were let go. She added that she believed that the decision was a prelude to the school's possible closure.

"I really think the school is being set up to be closed," she remarked.

Corrine McKinney, who has two children attending St. Mary's school, said parents are at a loss as to why the teachers were not rehired.

"You know, if they would just tell us the issue, we'd shut up," McKinney said.

Both Dwyer and Frykholm said the decision had nothing to do with the school's recent financial difficulties. Earlier this year, a \$60,000 deficit threatened to close St. Mary's sixth, seventh and eighth grades. Fundraising and parishioner-backed promissory notes enabled the school to stay K-8 next year.

Not everyone affiliated with the school was as gloomy as McKinney and Smith regarding the school's future. Ron Pohorence, a member of the school committee, believes the parish community will eventually get over the impact of the six teachers' departure.

"I just feel some of these changes can strengthen the school if people can get beyond looking at the short term," he said.

Black clergy, religious to meet July 23

More than 200 African-American clergy, women religious, deacons and seminarians are expected to attend a national gathering in Buffalo from July 23-29, when participants will be asked to reflect on their ministries and thereby become better ministers.

The gathering will consist of The Joint Conference of the National Black Clergy Caucus, National Black Sisters' Conference, the National Black Deacons' Wives and the National Black Catholic Seminarians Association.

The conference, which will be held at Buffalo's Hyatt-Regency Hotel, is sponsored by the Central City Apostolate of the Diocese of Buffalo. The Offices of Black Ministry in the Rochester and Syracuse dioceses assisted in the conference planning.

The highlight of the conference will be an awards dinner scheduled for 6 p.m. Wednesday, July 27. Awards will be given in three categories:

- The Rev. Joseph Davis Award for a National Black Catholic Clergy member.
- The Harriet Tubman Award for a member of the National Black Sisters' Conference.

- The Rev. Clarence Williams Award for a member of the National Black Catholic Seminarians Association.

The conference's theme is "Empowerment: Our Call to be Whole." Each organization's board will meet during the five-day gathering, which will also include several liturgies and artistic presentations — including a staging of *The Past is Past* at Turner/Carroll High School on Tuesday night, July 26.

Conference participants will also take a tour of the Underground Railroad Trail in western New York, and honor religious and clergy who are observing significant anniversaries this year.

The conference will conclude with several joint sessions July 28-29.

For information on the conference, call the Central City Apostolate at 716/847-8391.

Donations sought to reduce pregnancy center deficit

ROCHESTER — Crisis Pregnancy Center, 261 Alexander St., is seeking donations to reduce its current budgetary deficit.

Approximately 1,500 women were counseled in 1993 at Crisis Pregnancy Center's three facilities. The organization also operates at 1800 English Road in Greece and 945 E. Henrietta Road in Henrietta.

For information, call 716/232-3894.

Correction

Two priests were misidentified in recent stories.

A June 30 article featuring 12 priests marking their jubilees this year incorrectly reported the position now held by Father Richard Masciangelo, CPPS, former pastor of St. Jerome's Church in East Rochester. Father Masciangelo is currently parochial vicar of St. Lawrence Church in Greece.

A July 7 page-one article on clown ministers gave the wrong cluster for which Father David W. Mura is pastor. Father Mura is pastor of Holy Apostles/St. Anthony of Padua Cluster in Rochester.

We regret the errors.