



american
FOLKLORE
T H E A T R E



Volunteer Handbook

- 2011 -

Volunteer Handbook

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I. Welcome!

Dear Volunteer,

Thank you for choosing to volunteer for American Folklore Theatre! We recognize that there are many opportunities to volunteer throughout Door County and we're glad you've chosen to give some of your time to us. This year marks our 21st Season!

As a volunteer, you are a critical component of the AFT experience. We entrust you with the care of our theatre patrons. As a show volunteer, you may be asked to usher, assist with parking, sell merchandise or concessions, greet patrons as they come up the path, seat handicapped patrons, or seat patrons in the Reserved Section. We take your preference into account, but at times you may be asked to do something you haven't expressed an interest in doing. Please keep an open mind when trying a new task – we do our best to make sure each position will be an enjoyable experience for you.

AFT offers other chances to volunteer as well, including assisting with special events, such as our Red Carpet Night, our Raise the Curtain event, and benefits and readings that take place throughout the year. We also occasionally need help in the office with a mailing or other office tasks.

Sometimes a need for volunteers arises suddenly – thank you for being willing to help on short notice when you can!

If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact us:

(920) 854-6117 OR volunteer@folkloretheatre.com

See you under the stars!



Ann K. Birnschein
Office Manager & Volunteer Coordinator

II. AFT Mission Statement

The mission of American Folklore Theatre is to create, develop and present professional musical and dramatic productions which will further the knowledge and appreciation of the culture and heritage of the United States.

The Theatre is dedicated to maintaining standards of artistic excellence; celebrating and illuminating the human condition; reaching a large audience of all ages, including families; and fostering a humanistic work environment with adequate and appropriate emotional, financial and creative support for all those associated with us.

III. AFT Volunteer Program Goals

To furnish friendly and capable front of house staff at American Folklore Theatre performances and support staff for AFT's special events and office operations as necessary.

To provide American Folklore Theatre volunteers with an enjoyable and fulfilling experience.

To support an enthusiastic group of American Folklore Theatre advocates.

IV. Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

Your Rights

- You have the right to be given proper information and training to carry out your assignment.
- You have the right to a safe and friendly environment.
- You have the right to enjoy the performance or event at which you are volunteering when you are not occupied with your assignment.

Your Responsibilities

- You must only accept jobs that you will be able to commit to.
- You should ask questions when you do not understand an assignment.
- You are required to be on time for your assignment.
- You will represent AFT in a positive light.
- You will defer to the seating needs of paying customers.
- You are expected to respect and follow the instructions and requests of the House Manager, Stage Manager, Artistic Director, Technical Director, Volunteer Coordinator, Managing Director, and any other staff members you may report to.

V. Overview of Opportunities

There are many volunteer opportunities at American Folklore Theatre. Some of the most frequent are listed below:

Front of House Opportunities at Shows

When you arrive at the show, please check in with the House Manager for your assignment. Please wear an AFT vest and name tag, available at the venue.

Disabled Seating (Summer only)

In this position, you will meet people with special needs, assist them as they enter the theatre from the backstage handicapped parking area, and help them to their seating. Many of these patrons are elderly. Most will have called ahead to purchase tickets; you may have to pick up their tickets for them at Will Call. Or, you may receive their money and go to the box office to purchase tickets for them. You will be communicating with the intern or Parking Assistant who is directing traffic in the handicapped parking area to ensure a trouble-free experience for these guests.

Greeter (Summer only)

Our Greeters are often the first contact that our guests have with AFT. You will greet theatre-goers as they come down the path from the parking lot, answer questions, and direct them to the box office. In this position, you should enjoy talking with people and be able to give our guests a friendly welcome.

Golf Cart Shuttle Driver

This position is very important for many of our patrons. The person in this position is responsible for shuttling patrons who are unable to make the walk from the main parking lot to the amphitheatre. The driver assists patrons into the golf cart, shuttles them to the backstage area, and assists them in exiting the golf cart. Those interested in this position must complete special training prior to the season.

Merchandise Stand Assistant/Concessions Assistant

In the summer, there are two concession areas: one where AFT merchandise is sold before and after the show, which also serves as the Will Call window, and one at which we sell candy, soda, and water before the shows. The merchandise area accepts credit cards, but the concessions stand does not. Both areas will use cash boxes – no cash register. Training will be provided to familiarize you with the merchandise and procedures. You may be asked to assist with re-stocking of some items.

In the fall, these two areas are combined: there is one concession stand that sells AFT merchandise and water only.

**Parking
Assistant**

You will help direct cars in and out of the parking lot before shows and between shows on two-show days. In the summer, two Parking Assistants will be on duty – one to greet and direct cars as they enter the lot, and one to direct the car to the appropriate stall. On some days, we may need you to direct traffic in the handicapped parking area backstage. Extra orientation will be given for this position. In the fall, we typically staff four volunteers to facilitate parking at the Door Community Auditorium in Fish Creek.

**Reserved
Seating
Assistant
(Summer only)**

We have a reserved seating area of 120 seats; each row in this section is labeled with a letter and each seat is labeled with a number. You will collect and tear patrons' tickets and direct them to the correct seat(s). Reserved seats are for our company members' guests and our donors; or, patrons may purchase reserved seats for an additional \$6/ticket. Only people with reserved section tickets will be seated in this area unless the house manager advises differently.

Usher

There are a few different tasks for those who are ushers. The House Manager will coordinate specific assignments for each volunteer. Duties for this assignment may include:

- Sweeping the benches and checking for garbage in theatre before the shows.
- Putting program inserts in playbills before shows, if necessary.
- Handing out programs to people waiting in line before the show starts and as people enter theatre.
- Collecting and tearing tickets
- Setting up folding chairs (if needed) before the show and taking chairs down after show.
- Staffing exits as directed by House Manager and collecting playbills from those who wish to turn them back in
- Picking up garbage left in theatre after the show.
- Checking returned programs and putting them back in boxes, checking for correct inserts

Special Events and Other Opportunities

- AFT Ambassador** We need one or more ambassadors for each town or locality in the county. The ambassadors are primarily responsible for the distribution of brochures and posters to shops, hotels, and information centers spring through fall. They also assist office staff in maintaining a designated list of such business places, and may be asked to distribute additional marketing materials for special events in their designated area.
- Benefit Events** At our benefits, we need people to assist with set-up, on-site operations, and tear-down. You may be asked to set up tables, decorate, assist with on-site ticket and/or merchandise sales, assist with silent auction management, stack tables and chairs, etc. You will be in direct contact with donors and fellow fans and friends of AFT.
- Mailings** In the fall, we send out a mail piece to potential donors; numerous volunteers are needed for stuffing and sealing envelopes for this important mailing. From time to time we also have smaller mailings that may require folding, taping, and/or stuffing envelopes.
- Opening Night Receptions** We usually have a reception either prior to or following our opening performances of our world premiere shows. If you assist at these events, you may be asked to help set-up/tear-down, decorate, assist distributing food/beverages, etc. You will be in direct contact with donors and fellow fans and friends of AFT.
- Red Carpet Night** Each year, we host an evening for hospitality staff in Door County as a thank-you to them for helping spread the word about AFT and also to give them an opportunity to enjoy the AFT experience first-hand. Usually, we serve light appetizers to these attendees before the show. You will primarily be responsible for assisting with set-up & tear-down of a tent and tables, and serving food/beverages. You may be asked to assist with tracking attendees and reservations.
- Worker Bee** You will assist in a variety of manual labor and construction projects at Peninsula State Park. Duties include repairing theatre benches, mending fences, painting, maintaining AFT buildings, general clean up of theatre area, and raking wood chips. Contact Head Bee Ken Boyd by phone at 920-839-9338 or by email at kboyd39@aol.com if you are interested in this opportunity.

VI. Volunteer Benefits

We value our volunteers and want to thank you for all of your help! Rewards include:

Invitation to Opening Night Receptions: Immediately following the official opening performances of our world premieres, there is a party back stage. You'll be invited to attend the performance and the reception.

Complimentary Summer Tickets

Volunteers will receive theatre passes in the following ways:

- 1) Volunteers who work three to nine shows will be given one ticket for each summer show.
- 2) Volunteers who work ten or more shows will receive an unlimited pass.

In all cases, the passes are for the volunteers only – they are nontransferable.

End of the Season Thank You Party

In August, we have a party to celebrate “you” and everything you do for AFT. This party is traditionally an outdoor picnic. You'll be invited to enjoy some food, camaraderie, and special AFT entertainment.

Complimentary Fall Tickets

Volunteers who work at 5 fall shows will be given a complimentary ticket for that show. Attending a specific show is based on availability and we encourage you to make a reservation since fall shows often sell out.

Between Show Meals

Volunteers who work for both summer shows on Wednesdays or Saturdays will be given a free meal. The House Manager will inform the volunteers when they may go back stage for dinner. Because the food is served outside behind the stage during the performance, please be as quiet as possible.

VIII. Parking Policies at Peninsula State Park

AFT staff and volunteers need to have either a park sticker OR a (free) green pass attached to their car's windshield. They can obtain the free work pass at either contact location for the Park. This they display on their car's driver side windshield showing that they are associated with AFT.

The Nicolet Beach overflow parking lot is used for the amphitheater parking. This is usually very busy - some days well past 5:00pm - with beach users who do need stickers. Without the free pass on the windshield, the Park does not have the time or ability to identify which cars belong to AFT staff/volunteers and which belong to beach or bike trail users.

Staff and volunteers can only use the free pass while working on or attending AFT productions. They cannot use the free pass to recreate or park elsewhere in Peninsula State Park (that requires a regular park sticker).

Staff and volunteers should not park in the boat trailer area prior to 5:00pm, as the Park is extremely short on boat trailer parking on busy days.

AFT customers do not need a sticker if they arrive one hour or less before the show (i.e. after 5:00pm) and they are not using any of the other park facilities (i.e. they park and walk directly to the AFT area). If they arrive more than an hour in advance, they do need to purchase at least a one-hour Park sticker.

IX. The Story of American Folklore Theatre

“Come all ye bold people that live by the lakes . . . I sing the story of your forebearers.”
– *From Song of the Inland Seas, first performed in 1970 at Peninsula State Park.*

“The acorn never falls far from the tree” ... and so it is with American Folklore Theatre, still playing on an outdoor stage at Peninsula State Park and on indoor stages across the state, its actors still equipped with guitars and voices that tell stories of legend and lore. Since 1990, this troupe has been providing original musical tales about some of America’s most intriguing people.

Shows have involved the adventures of John Muir, father of our national parks, in ***The Mountains Call My Name*** and the music of James Taylor in ***Sweet Baby James***. Humor comes to life as AFT’s playwrights and composers concoct characters like brothers Leo and Roger in ***Belgians in Heaven*** and ice fishermen Lloyd and Marvin in ***Guys On Ice***.

The story of American Folklore Theatre (AFT) begins with Dave Peterson, a Madison, Wisconsin, professor who taught a one-month course on *Folklore of the Great Lakes* at the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay in January of 1970. He and his students wrote the ***Song of the Inland Seas***, an epic to celebrate the American heroes of the Upper Midwest.

Soon after, while camping at Peninsula State Park in Door County, Peterson came across a pine-rimmed theatre with a tree vaulting through a corner of the stage. The theatre was used for occasional slide shows or naturalist programs. Feeling the magic in this beautiful wooded setting, he put together a cast of 18 singers and instrumentalists and performed ***Song of the Inland Seas*** on the Peninsula Park stage for two weeks in the summer of 1970. It was described as “one part Peter, Paul and Mary, one part Broadway show tune, one part folksy Wisconsin, and the rest pure cornball spunkiness.” The show was a hit and was presented on the Peninsula stage for the next two years by the newly formed company known as “The Heritage Ensemble.” The Heritage Ensemble performed on the stage in Peninsula State Park for the next 20 years.

During those 20 years, the Ensemble produced and performed original shows covering many aspects of Midwestern lore, like the history of Milwaukee, the settlement of the Fox River Valley, shows about Carl Sandburg and Mark Twain, railroad workers and miners. Each show became deeper and more complex as the troupe evolved toward a higher standard of quality. “The main thing was the material. The songs and stories seemed to grow from the very soil of the Wisconsin woodlands,” said Fred “Doc” Heide, who joined the Ensemble in 1972 and now serves as AFT’s Artistic Advisor and a member of its Board of Directors. Heide, a student of history and now a psychology professor, wrote his first Ensemble show ***The People’s Song to Sing*** in 1975, when he was a senior at UWGB. Others who joined the troupe, like Fred Alley, Jeff Herbst, James Kaplan, Paul Sills and Gerald Pelrine became household names as summer audiences returned year after year to see what new shows the troupe had created.

Performing conditions continued to improve during the 1980s. After years of changing costumes in the mud behind the stage and having inadequate lighting and sound equipment, the company built a technical booth and hired a sound technician in 1987. In 1989, a dressing room was constructed with donations received from loyal patrons.

The most dramatic change came in 1990, when Doc Heide, Gerald Pelrine and Fred Alley, all long-time members of The Heritage Ensemble, helped the organization move to a new level of professionalism. The group's name was changed to American Folklore Theatre (AFT) to reflect their intent to broaden its scope while still depicting its roots in the traditions of populist culture. The word "Theatre" was added to clarify that its productions were both dramatic and musical. Theatergoers were thrilled to hear songs of Native Americans in ***Moon of the Long Nights*** in 1991, and were enchanted by the Northwoods love story ***Northern Lights*** in 1993. The hit show ***Lumberjacks in Love*** premiered in 1996 and was so popular that AFT has brought it back to the stage in Peninsula State Park 7 times; it has also played to sold out houses in Milwaukee.

In 1992, AFT decided to continue its music making into the fall season and started its Town Hall Series. They began playing in several Northern Door town halls with ensemble shows like the Fred Alley/James Kaplan collaboration ***Goodnight Irene*** featuring the songs of The Weavers. Their ice fishing musical, ***Guys On Ice*** proved to be such a sensation that AFT took it to the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre in 1998 and 1999, and has since been staged at the Green Bay Community Theatre, Third Avenue Playhouse in Sturgeon Bay and the SC Grand in Green Bay. In 2003 ***Guys on Ice*** came home to AFT's stage in the park for the first time ever. At all venues and times of year this musical has played to sold out houses, creating news stories and a cult following everywhere it is seen. ***Guys on Ice*** has played in Milwaukee and Madison, Wisconsin; Ashland, Oregon; and Detroit & Chelsea, Michigan. In 2001, ***Loose Lips Sink Ships*** became AFT's single season best-seller with record audience attendance nearing 900 at several performances.

2001 would prove to be quite the year for AFT. It was on May 1st of that year that AFT suffered the loss of its co-founder Fred Alley. Fred had been involved with AFT since 1980 and had come to be known as the "face" of AFT and for many was the face of the arts community of Door County. His beautiful tenor voice was emblazoned in the minds of all that heard him, he collaborated on more shows than AFT can count and he was a key player in developing AFT into what it is today. Fred was 38 when he died of a heart attack while on his daily run in Door County.

Also in 2001 Fred and AFT received two major awards given by the Peninsula Arts Association. The award for institutions, entitled the "Visionary Award," celebrates the commitment of local organizations to the development of new programs. The inaugural Visionary Award went to American Folklore Theatre for its New Works program and for its help in launching Door Shakespeare. The award for individuals, "The Champion Award" was presented to Fred Alley posthumously in this year. As further recognition of his impact on the community, this award was renamed "The Fred Alley Award".

Since AFT emerged from the Heritage Ensemble, the development of this troupe has been phenomenal. The annual budget has gone from \$20,000 to over \$850,000. AFT conducts professional auditions in New York and company members now perform regularly on and off-Broadway and at major regional theatres throughout the country. The summer main-stage season has expanded to three or four shows in repertory, and the fall season has been added and expanded. The performances are enhanced by a state-of-the-art sound system. AFT has a year-round administrative office. Over 40,000 people attend performances each year, making AFT one of the major theatres in the Midwest.

Many AFT shows have been memorized by adoring fans who buy the complete works on cassette tapes and compact discs and learn the lyrics. Parents from around the country write to AFT, saying their children sing and act out scenes from AFT all year-round. The charm of AFT continues to be the original words and music that bring people-stories to life, creating empathy between theatergoers and performers. That remains true to the company's mission "to develop and present professional dramatic productions of a cultural and/or educational nature that will further the knowledge and appreciation of the heritage of the United States..."

The effort has not been lost on the thousands of families who see AFT as a highlight of their vacation. Peninsula State Park officials note that years ago, campers discovered AFT performances to be good family entertainment, but now see the park as a "destination" because it is home to AFT.

The founders of AFT say the secret to their success is how many of the troupe's members have worked together and shared the same vision for so many years. From the very beginning, says Heide, "it was a true theatre of the folk, carrying forth themes that had found their way here in the canoes of French voyageurs or the holds of iron ore ships. To offer these gems under a swirl of stars with the smell of campfires warming your soul, priced so that anyone who hankered to could come, this was vision indeed."

Planning for the future is essential to AFT's ability to grow and thrive, according to Heide. In 1997 a community board was formed which provided additional strength and stability to the organization. In 1998 AFT hired a full-time general manager to allow the writers and producers more time to spend on creative projects. AFT launched its first very successful capital campaign in 1999 which raised money to build a new dressing room at Peninsula State Park in 2001 and a new stage to be designed and built in time for the 2003 season. During the 2000 season, the first ever Children's Theatre Workshops were launched by the group. Last year marked the 20th anniversary of American Folklore Theatre—with many special happenings.

Although most members of the company write or perform elsewhere during the off-season, their summer performance season is usually the highlight of their year. When asked why they continue to be a part of AFT, they respond, "AFT is a place where theatre is still close enough you can touch it." As long as the audience keeps coming back, they will continue to gather under the stars each summer to tell stories and sing songs.

X. American Folklore Theatre Production History

2011:

Summer: Bing! The Cherry Musical – premier, Lumberjacks in Love, Guys & Does

Fall: The Spitfire Grill, Guys on Ice

Touring: Guys & Does, Guys on Ice

2010:

Summer: Life on the Mississippi – premier, Cheeseheads, the Musical, Bone Dance

Fall & Touring: Guys & Does

Holiday: Home for the Holidays with AFT

2009:

Summer: Cheeseheads, The Musical-Premier, Sunsets & S'Mores-Premier, Muskie Love

Fall: Guys & Does-Premier

Holiday: Home for the Holidays with AFT, featuring Eric Lewis, Doc Heide, & Special Guest Holly Feldman

Touring: Guys & Does – Green Bay Community Theater

2008:

Summer: Fishing for the Moon, Lumberjacks in Love, A Cabin With a View

Fall: Sometimes a Song: The Music of Dan Fogelberg, And If Elected

Holiday: Home for the Holidays with AFT, featuring Eric Lewis and Chris Irwin

2007:

Summer: A Cabin With a View-Premier, Belgians in Heaven, Guys on Ice

Fall: Main-Travelled Roads-Premier

Holiday: Home for the Holidays with AFT

2006:

Summer: See Jane Vote-Premier, Loose Lips Sink Ships, Belgians in Heaven

Fall: Fish and Whistle: The songs of John Prine

Holiday: Home for the Holidays with AFT-Scott Wakefield and Claudia Russell

2005:

Summer: Muskie Love, Lumberjacks in Love, Bone Dance

Fall: Goodnight Irene: The Music of the Weavers

Touring: Guys on Ice (Third Avenue Playhouse)

2004:

Summer: Muskie Love-Premier, Guys on Ice, When Dogs Could Talk

Fall: Eric Lewis and Friends, Guys on Ice, And If Elected

2003:

Summer: Packer Fans from Outer Space, Ya, Ya, You Betcha!, Guys on Ice

Fall: Old Friends

Touring: Packer Fans from Outer Space (Meyer Theatre, Green Bay), Guys on Ice (Frank's Dinner Theatre, Green Bay, November), The Bachelors (Frank's Dinner Theatre, Green Bay, January)

AFT Production History (cont.)

2002:

Summer: Packer Fans from Outer Space-Premier, Beneath the Northern Sky, Loose Lips Sink Ships

Fall: The Bachelors, The Spitfire Grill, Eric & Andy: Live In Fish Creek

Touring: Guys on Ice (Frank's Dinner Theatre, Green Bay)

2001:

Summer: Song of the Inland Seas, Lumberjacks in Love, Loose Lips Sink Ships-Premier

Fall: The Bachelors, Bob Dumkee's Farm

Touring: Guys on Ice (Frank's Dinner Theatre-Green Bay)

2000:

Summer: A Kettle of Fish, Lumberjacks in Love, Moonlight and Marshmallows Belgians in Heaven

Fall: Guys on Ice, Sweet Baby James

1999:

Summer: Fishing for the Moon, Fool Me Once, Belgians in Heaven

Fall: Guys on Ice

Touring: Guys on Ice (Green Bay Community Theater)

1998:

Summer: Belgians in Heaven, Bone Dance, A Little Folk Music, Lumberjacks in Love

Fall: Guys on Ice

1997:

Summer: Lumberjacks in Love, Northern Lights, Tongue N' Cheek

Fall: Old Friends

1996:

Summer: Lumberjacks in Love, Goodnight Irene, The Mountains Call My Name

Belgians in Heaven (1 show)

Fall: And If Elected

1995:

Summer: One Night in Frog Station, Bone Dance, Belgians in Heaven

Fall: Harvest Moon

1994:

Summer: Belgians in Heaven, The Passage

Fall: Goodnight Irene

1993:

Summer: Malarkey, Northern Lights

Fall: Malarkey

1992:

Summer: Tales of the Midnight Sun, Fishing for the Moon

Fall: And if Elected

AFT Production History (cont.)

1991:

Spring Tour: The Mountains Call My Name

Summer: Moon of the Long Nights, Tongue N' Cheek

1990:

Summer: Song of the Inland Seas, Mule for Breakfast Again

Fall Touring: The Mountains Call My name
